

**Chapter 1 : Religion in Black America - Wikipedia**

*Black Hebrew Israelites (also called Black Hebrews, African Hebrew Israelites, and Hebrew Israelites) are groups of African Americans who believe they are descendants of the ancient Israelites. Black Hebrews adhere in varying degrees to the religious beliefs and practices of both Christianity and Judaism.*

The numbers grew rapidly after No organized African religious practices are known to have taken place in the Thirteen Colonies , but Muslims practiced Islam surreptitiously or underground throughout the era of the enslavement of African people in America. The story of Abdulrahman Ibrahim Ibn Sori , a Muslim prince from West Africa who spent 40 years as a slave in the United States from onwards before being freed, demonstrates the survival of Muslim belief and practice among enslaved Africans in America. In the midth century scholars debated whether there were distinctive African elements embedded in black American religious practices, as in music and dancing. Scholars no longer look for such cultural transfers regarding religion. Baptist gatherings made slaves welcome at their services, and a few Baptist congregations contained[ when? The Black church- was both an expression of community and unique African-American spirituality, and a reaction to discrimination. The church also the center of education. Since the church was part of the community and wanted to provide education; they educated the freed and enslaved Blacks. Seeking autonomy, some blacks like Richard Allen founded separate Black denominations. After the Great Awakening , many blacks joined the Baptist Church , which allowed for their participation, including roles as elders and preachers. For instance, First Baptist Church and Gillfield Baptist Church of Petersburg, Virginia , both had organized congregations by and were the first Baptist churches in the city. Black sermonic tradition Historian Bruce Arnold argues that successful black pastors historically undertook multiple roles. The black pastor is the paterfamilias of his church, responsible for shepherding and holding the community together, passing on its history and traditions, and acting as spiritual leader, wise counselor, and prophetic guide. The black pastor is a counselor and comforter stressing transforming, sustaining, and nurturing abilities of God to help the flock through times of discord, doubts, and counsels them to protect themselves against emotional deterioration. The black pastor is a community organizer and intermediary. Raboteau describes a common style of black preaching first developed in the early nineteenth century, and common throughout the 20th and into the 21st centuries: The preacher begins calmly, speaking in conversational, if oratorical and occasionally grandiloquent, prose; he then gradually begins to speak more rapidly, excitedly, and to chant his words and time to a regular beat; finally, he reaches an emotional peak in which the chanted speech becomes tonal and merges with the singing, clapping, and shouting of the congregation. White Baptists expressed the view that: God had chastised them and given them a special mission “ to maintain orthodoxy, strict biblicism, personal piety, and traditional race relations. Slavery, they insisted, had not been sinful. They appreciated opportunities to exercise their independence, to worship in their own way, to affirm their worth and dignity, and to proclaim the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man. Most of all, they could form their own churches, associations, and conventions. These institutions offered self-help and racial uplift, and provided places where the gospel of liberation could be proclaimed. As a result, black preachers continued to insist that God would protect and help him; God would be their rock in a stormy land. They are conducive to developing in the Negro a complacent, laissez-faire attitude toward life. They support the view that God in His good time and in His own way will bring about the conditions that will lead to the fulfillment of social needs. They encourage Negroes to feel that God will see to it that things work out all right; if not in this world, certainly in the world to come. They make God influential chiefly in the beyond, and preparing a home for the faithful “ a home where His suffering servants will be free of the trials and tribulations which beset them on earth. In a process of self-segregation, practically all blacks left white churches so that few racially integrated congregations remained apart from some Catholic churches in Louisiana. Four main organizations competed with each other across the South to form new Methodist churches composed of freedmen. Pearce , an AME minister in Florida: Several served in Congress and one, Hiram Revels , in the U. The great majority of blacks lived in rural areas where services were held in small makeshift buildings. In the cities black churches were more

visible. Regularly scheduled revivals operated over a period of weeks reaching large, appreciative and noisy crowds. The larger churches had a systematic education program, besides the Sunday schools, and Bible study groups. They held literacy classes to enable older members to read the Bible. Private black colleges, such as Fisk in Nashville, often began in the basement of the churches. Church supported the struggling small business community. Churches hosted protest meetings, rallies, and Republican party conventions. Prominent laymen and ministers negotiated political deals, and often ran for office until disfranchisement took effect in the s. In the s, the prohibition of liquor was a major political concern that allowed for collaboration with like-minded white Protestants. In every case, the pastor was the dominant decision-maker. At the same time there were many "storefront" churches with a few dozen members.

*revisit religion, identity This is why religion and identity in the Caribbean must be revisited by the region's philosophers, psychologists, psychiatrists, sociologists, and educators. Simply supplanting Christianity with Afrocentric religions, while perceptually encouraging, does little to address the identity question.*

Various leaders for different sects. There is no primary leader today. First started in the United States before the Civil War. Various major cities across the United States with state chapters. There does not appear to be a central headquarter of leadership for the movement. Approximately , among the dozens of offshoot branches. Approximately 50, Black Hebrews, while the number who follow some form of Judaism broadly defined could be up to , There is a vast amount of diversity amongst various groups who claim to be descendants of the ancient Israelites. It is difficult to distinguish between all the various offshoots and movements within the broad movement of "Black Jewish Identity. One sect originated before the Civil War. In the s other sects began to appear, such as those lead by Yahweh Ben Yahweh - , or Hulon Mitchell, Jr. Some groups stand on the street corners of major cities and condemn people for their allegedly false beliefs while using vulgar language. They keep the Jewish Sabbath and many other Jewish customs including circumcision, dietary laws, and the observance of certain Jewish holidays and festivals like Yom Kippur and Passover. They use the Old and New Testament to support their teachings, especially the five books of Moses Genesis to Deuteronomy. They do not consider themselves to be Jews in the modern sense of the term as associated with Orthodox, Reformed, Conservative, or Hasidic Judaism. It is difficult to determine where these Hebrew Israelites get their ultimate source of authority since they do not have any official writings. They apparently view the Bible both the Old and New Testaments , preferably the King James Version, as an authoritative source, but they just argue that there have been a number of mistranslations. Nevertheless, some hint that the canon of the Bible is not fixed. They apparently use other writings outside of the Bible to support their ideas, such as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha meaning literally "false writings". Generally, the Black Hebrew Israelites teach that certain groups of black are the descendants of ancient Israelites and that white people especially those in Israel today are not true descendants. A very small faction is racist and considers white people to be evil. Most Black Hebrew Israelites are peaceable and oppose racism. Following are some of the teachings that many Black Hebrew Israelites affirm. However, there is no universal consensus on all of these points, nor is this an exhaustive summary of all their beliefs. Not all divisions within the movement hold to all these teaching since there is vast diversity in the movement that has no official creed. God The Trinity is a false teaching. Jesus There is no consensus on who the Messiah is: According to their website, there is no universal agreement regarding who the Messiah is. It is not a central component of what defines them as Hebrew Israelites. He was born through the womb of an Israelite woman. Only his true name given from Heaven which can be spoken in every language, is your key to salvation. Relationship to Judaism It is necessary to keep the Sabbath and observe various Jewish laws. Hell Hell is a metaphor and is not a literal place where people suffer. There is no heaven and hell. There is no place where people burn. We are in the caucasian heaven now 7. Black People Black people are the true Israelites from the tribe of Judah. They argue this from various passages in the Old Testament including Deuteronomy 28 cf. Leviticus 26 which references ships Deut. Therefore, to the Hebrew Israelites, this is conclusive proof that the original Israelites were black. Hispanics, Native Americans, and Negroes are the real Israelites [http: The Jews are the Negroes in America](http://The Jews are the Negroes in America). The Jews are one tribe of people from Judah. Many of the popular people in history were black, including Moses, Pharoah, certain Roman emperors, etc. White People White people are seen as conspirators who attempt to persecute the black people and hide their true identity as Israelites. Many Black Hebrew Israelites see white people as almost subhuman. People on this earth are in the caucasian heaven right now since white people are dominating this world and subjugating black people. The King James Version is the best translation of the Bible, but there are mistranslations in it including the removal of Yah, etc. When quoting Romans 9: There is virtually no textual support in all of the thousands of manuscripts of the New Testament for such a reading of Romans 9: Eschatology End Times The Hebrew Israelites have some interesting views regarding

the end times or eschatology. According to many of them, Luke When the Messiah returns, all Israel meaning black people will be gathered back to the promised land near Israel of today. No Official Canon of Scripture The Black Hebrew Israelites appear to allow for the idea that there are other books that should be in the Canon of Scripture, or are at least as authoritative as the sixty-six books in the Bible. There are other books that belong in the Bible, such as the book of Enoch. However, there are good reasons to believe that only the sixty-six books of the Bible are authoritative. First, Jesus quoted the entire 24 books of the Hebrew Canon by referring to Abel [the first martyr in Genesis] to Zechariah [the last martyr in Chronicles] Matthew These twenty-four books of the Hebrew Bible correspond exactly with the number of books found in standard Protestant Bibles today, which is The Jews just arranged their books differently. Second, there are no references to "thus says the Lord" or "the Scripture says," etc. Since Jesus claimed to be divine and supported that claim by rising from the dead, it is reasonable to believe what Jesus taught. Therefore, the book of Enoch and other such works, while they may have some accurate teachings, are not inspired by God. In 21st century American culture, where black people have suffered greatly and continue to endure difficult social and cultural hardships, it is not surprising that many African American men turn to such systems of thought as espoused by the Black Hebrew Israelites. Many African American men are in prison. As a result of these many hardships black people face, the ideas espoused by the Hebrew Israelites serve to empower and liberate them from their destitute condition A Response to Some of the Teachings of the Hebrew Israelites Black Hebrew Israelites, please read this first If you identify yourself as a Hebrew Israelite and you are reading this website, I invite you to please investigate what we are discussing here. We do not hate the precious people who claim to be Black Hebrew Israelites. Jesus said, "And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free," John 8: He also said, " I am the way, the truth, and the life: My goal in writing this section is to point you to the truth found in the person of Jesus Christ. He claimed to be the only way to God. If one has a false view of Jesus or minimizes who Jesus claimed to be, this group cannot be following God. These issues are of eternal significance. How we view God will affect how we view everything else in our lives. A false god and a false Jesus will only provide you with a false salvation. I do not hate black people, nor do I hate any Black Hebrew Israelites. My hope and plea is to accurately represent the teachings of the Black Hebrew Israelite movement and provide polite, loving responses to any of these false teachings. I do not claim to have perfect knowledge of the teachings and ideas of the many people who identify themselves as Black Hebrew Israelites. I have done my best to accurately represent a very diverse group. I take complete responsibility for any mistakes that I may have made in representing the Black Hebrew Israelites. I welcome your questions, thoughts, and concerns. If I have misrepresented the BHI viewpoint, please do not hesitate to contact us with documentation. May God bless you with His Truth! Ryan Turner Error 1a: Racism While many Black Hebrew Israelites do not claim to be racists, or to hate someone based on skin color, in practice, these Hebrew Israelites do not act this way. On street corners, they frequently accuse people of other races as being backward, wicked, or even subhuman. All of the Black Hebrew Israelite teachings on white people indicate that they are not valued as highly by God. However, this is not the teaching of the New Testament in which God loves the whole world John 3: While he certainly chose Israel as a nation and called Abraham, God still had a special love and compassion for all the people of the earth. Jesus sent the apostles into the ends of the earth Acts 1: The book of Revelation describes people of every tribe, tongue, and nation worshipping the Lamb, Jesus Christ. It does not merely describe one people group whether black, white, yellow, or red. Minimizing the Person of Jesus The Black Hebrew Israelites, unfortunately, minimize the person of Jesus , and the focus of their religion becomes black identity and cultural revolution. While it is certainly true that black people have been mistreated and taught many false things by mainstream culture, this is not grounds for minimizing the person of Jesus Christ. Who Jesus is should be the central component of any religion that claims to follow the Old and New Testament. Jesus said, "for unless you believe that I am [He], you will die in your sins," John 8: To reject who Jesus claimed to be is to suffer death in your sins. This is the most critical issue of any religion.

**Chapter 3 : A Religious Portrait of African-Americans | Pew Research Center**

*Black Churches and Institutional Religious Life. In addition to the often hidden and covert religious activities in the invisible institution of slave religion, antebellum African American Christians developed churches that provided arenas for independent interpretation of Christian teaching and practice as well as a platform for political organizing.*

Executive Summary The American religious landscape is undergoing a dramatic transformation. White Christians, once the dominant religious group in the U. Today, fewer than half of all states are majority white Christian. As recently as , 39 states had majority white Christian populations. This landmark report is based on a sample of more than , Americans from all 50 states and includes detailed information about their religious affiliation, denominational ties, political affiliation, and other important demographic attributes. Among the major findings: White Christians now account for fewer than half of the public. White evangelical Protestants are in decline—along with white mainline Protestants and white Catholics. White evangelical Protestants were once thought to be bucking a longer trend, but over the past decade their numbers have dropped substantially. Non-Christian religious groups are growing, but they still represent less than one in ten Americans combined. Muslims, Hindus, and Buddhists are all far younger than white Christian groups. In contrast, white Christian groups are aging. The Catholic Church is experiencing an ethnic transformation. Atheists and agnostics account for a minority of all religiously unaffiliated. These states tend to be more concentrated in the Western U. No state is less religiously diverse than Mississippi. The state is heavily Protestant and dominated by a single denomination: No state has a greater degree of religious diversity than New York. The cultural center of the Catholic Church is shifting south. Immigration from predominantly Catholic countries in Latin America means new Catholic populations are settling in the Southwest. Jews, Hindus, and Unitarian-Universalists stand out as the most educated groups in the American religious landscape. Asian or Pacific-Islander Americans have a significantly different religious profile than other racial or ethnic groups. There are as many Asian or Pacific-Islander Americans affiliated with non-Christian religions as with Christian religious groups. White Christians have become a minority in the Democratic Party. Forty percent identify as religiously unaffiliated. White evangelical Protestants remain the dominant religious force in the GOP. A Portrait of Religious Affiliation in America The American religious landscape has undergone dramatic changes in the last decade and is more diverse today than at any time since modern sociological measurements began. White Christians, which once dominated the religious landscape as recently as a decade ago, now account for fewer than half of the public. Mormons comprise two percent of the population. Seven percent of the public is Hispanic Catholic. Non-Christian religious groups constitute less than one in ten Americans. Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus are each roughly one percent of the population. Jewish Americans account for two percent of the public. No religious group is larger than those who are unaffiliated from religion. The religious landscape in the U. Nearly two-thirds of seniors age 65 or older identify as white and Christian: The Geography of Religion in America There is substantial variation in religious identity between the four regions of the United States. Twelve percent of residents in the West are white evangelical Protestant. In contrast, Catholics represent a much larger share of Northeastern residents. Notably, there is significant racial and ethnic variation among Catholics by region. There are substantial differences in the religious profiles of the 50 states, although they follow regional patterns. There are 20 states in which no religious group comprises a greater share of residents than the religiously unaffiliated. In 11 states, many of which are clustered in the Northeast, no religious group outnumbers Catholics. In 13 states, no religious group comprises a larger share of residents than white evangelical Protestants. Unsurprisingly, most of these states can be found in the South. At least one-third of the residents in the following states are white evangelical Protestant: Religious Diversity Despite the incredible variety of religious expression and identity in the U. To measure the religious diversity in the country, this report uses an index developed to measure variations in the concentration of global religious populations. The least religiously diverse states in the U. Mississippi is the least diverse state in the U. Conversely, the most religiously diverse states are primarily located in the Northeastern U. Protestant Denominations Among Protestants in the U. Only three percent of

Protestants belong to an Episcopalian or Anglican denomination. The pattern of denominational membership among Protestants varies significantly by region. Lutherans remain much more prevalent in the Midwest than any other part of the country. Only three percent of Southerners are Lutheran. Certain states are also unique in that they are dominated by one denominational family. Jewish Identity and Denominations Overall, 1. However, previous research has suggested questions that frame Jewish identity in explicitly religious terms may undercount the total Jewish population because they miss those with a cultural or familial affinity. To address this issue, the survey included a question to identify those who had a cultural rather than a religious connection to their Jewish identity. The issue of Jewish cultural identity has become increasingly important as younger Jews are more likely to have a cultural affinity. Among all Jewish Americans—those who identify as Jewish both religiously and culturally—more identify as Reform than any other denomination. Two percent identify as Reconstructionist. There is, however, a considerable disparity in denominational membership among Jews by age. Five percent of Americans are black evangelical Protestants, two percent are Hispanic evangelical Protestants, and other or mixed-race evangelical Protestants make up one percent of the public. Like all Christians in the U. Young evangelical Protestants are far more racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations. Much of the decline has occurred in the last few decades. Although white Christians have experienced substantial losses nationally, there are notable divisions in the size of the white Christian population by state. In total, fewer than half 23 of all 50 states have majority white Christian populations. This represents a significant drop from , when 39 states had majority white Christian populations. Many of the states that experienced the greatest losses are concentrated in the Northeast. Massachusetts, for example, experienced a point decline in the number of white Christians living in the state over the last decade. Hawaii, the only state to experience an increase in the proportion of white Christians, saw an increase of six percentage points. The Decline of White Evangelical Protestants Although much of the research on religious decline has focused on losses among white mainline Protestants and white Catholics—groups with well-documented declines—much of the public discussion on religious change has missed one of the most important stories of the last decade: The decline of white evangelical Protestants. No religious group has older members than white evangelical Protestants and white Catholics. The median age of white evangelical Protestants and white Catholics is 55 years old, slightly higher than white mainline Protestants at 54 years old. Unitarian-Universalists are also much older than members of other religious groups: The median age is 54 years. Four decades earlier, the median age of these white Christian groups was much lower. In , the median age of white Catholics was just 40 years old, while the median age of white Protestants was 45 years old. The median ages of Hindus 32 years , Muslims 32 years , Buddhists 36 years , religiously unaffiliated Americans 37 years , and Hispanic Protestants 37 years are below The Mormon Exception Although Mormons are a predominantly white Christian religious tradition, there is little evidence to suggest that they are experiencing similar declines. However, the degree of racial and ethnic diversity among Protestants varies considerably between denominational families. Protestants who belong to non-denominational Protestant churches are also somewhat diverse: The Ethnic Transformation of the U. Catholic Church For most of the past 25 years, American Catholics have been overwhelmingly white. Catholics were white, non-Hispanic. Notably, much of the shift in the ethnic composition of the American Catholic community occurred over just the last couple of decades. Generational differences in the ethnic and racial make-up of American Catholics also suggest that a substantial cultural shift is underway. Demographic differences between Hispanic and white Catholics also suggest that the Hispanic Catholic community is poised to make further gains. The discrepancy in parental status is driven largely by age differences between Hispanic Catholics and white Catholics. Second, Hispanic Catholics are more likely to have larger families: Catholic Church was centered in the Northeast, where European immigrants from predominantly Catholic countries, such as Italy and Ireland, first settled. However, due to recent patterns of immigration from predominantly Catholic countries in Latin America, particularly Mexico, the Catholic population is experiencing growth across the Southwest. Catholic population lives in the Northeast. Since the early s, this group has roughly tripled in size. Religious identity is highly stratified by age, with younger Americans age most likely to be religiously unaffiliated and seniors age 65 or older least likely to identify this way.

## Chapter 4 : Christian Identity: A Religion for White Racists

*African-American culture is primarily rooted in West and Central Africa. Understanding its identity within the culture of the United States it is, in the anthropological sense, conscious of its origins as largely a blend of West and Central African cultures.*

African-American dance African-American dance , like other aspects of African-American culture, finds its earliest roots in the dances of the hundreds of African ethnic groups that made up African slaves in the Americas as well as influences from European sources in the United States. Dance in the African tradition, and thus in the tradition of slaves, was a part of both everyday life and special occasions. Many of these traditions such as get down , ring shouts , and other elements of African body language survive as elements of modern dance. These shows often presented African Americans as caricatures for ridicule to large audiences. The first African-American dance to become popular with white dancers was the cakewalk in African-American dance forms such as tap , a combination of African and European influences, gained widespread popularity thanks to dancers such as Bill Robinson and were used by leading white choreographers, who often hired African-American dancers. Groups such as the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater have continued to contribute to the growth of this form. Modern popular dance in America is also greatly influenced by African-American dance. American popular dance has also drawn many influences from African-American dance most notably in the hip-hop genre. African-American art From its early origins in slave communities, through the end of the 20th century, African-American art has made a vital contribution to the art of the United States. These artifacts have similarities with comparable crafts in West and Central Africa. In contrast, African-American artisans like the New England-based engraver Scipio Moorhead and the Baltimore portrait painter Joshua Johnson created art that was conceived in a thoroughly western European fashion. Martin , mixed-media collage on rag paper After the American Civil War , museums and galleries began more frequently to display the work of African-American artists. Cultural expression in mainstream venues was still limited by the dominant European aesthetic and by racial prejudice. To increase the visibility of their work, many African-American artists traveled to Europe where they had greater freedom. In later years, other programs and institutions, such as the New York City-based Harmon Foundation , helped to foster African-American artistic talent. Augusta Savage , Elizabeth Catlett , Lois Mailou Jones , Romare Bearden , Jacob Lawrence , and others exhibited in museums and juried art shows, and built reputations and followings for themselves. In the s and s, there were very few widely accepted African-American artists. Pierce, Florida , created idyllic, quickly realized images of the Florida landscape and peddled some 50, of them from the trunks of their cars. They sold their art directly to the public rather than through galleries and art agents, thus receiving the name "The Highwaymen". Rediscovered in the mids, today they are recognized as an important part of American folk history. The sculptor Martin Puryear , whose work has been acclaimed for years, was being honored with a year retrospective of his work at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in November African-American literature African-American literature has its roots in the oral traditions of African slaves in America. The slaves used stories and fables in much the same way as they used music. These authors reached early high points by telling slave narratives.

**Chapter 5 : RD10Q: What is Black Religion? | Religion Dispatches**

*the construction of black identity promoted by public agencies, whether religious or non-religious, by what is known as the Movement of 'People of African origin'; 2) the appropriation of aspects of Afro-Brazilian religiosity.*

Palmer, "could interact with one another and forge a common culture with core beliefs and assumptions. Such an environment enhanced the process of becoming black American while simultaneously fostering the retention of much of their Africinity. Probably less than among the enslaved Africans in the Caribbean and Latin America where there were more slaves per plantation than in the British Atlantic colonies, and more of those slaves were African-born. Raboteau, "even as the gods of Africa gave way to the God of Christianity, the African heritage of singing, dancing, spirit possession, and magic continued to influence Afro-American spirituals, ring shouts, and folk beliefs. Several questions concerning religious practice were suggested to the interviewers: Funerals and funeral songs. Due to the nature of the questions, and because the interviewees were enslaved from the s to , their responses relate primarily to Christian practice except when addressing the inquiry about voodoo. What responses appear in a majority of the excerpts? What patterns do you find? Soon after the end of the Civil War, a collection of religious and secular songs of enslaved African Americans was published as *Slave Songs of the United States*, compiled primarily by three white northerners who had gone to the South Carolina sea islands in to work with recently freed African Americans. The collection includes songs documented by the three editors and others throughout the Confederate South. The six religious songs presented here emphasize the community bond enhanced among the enslaved by singing. Two were sung at "the breaking up of a [religious] meeting," two at gatherings for the dead, and two for expressing the desire for freedom with coded words to hide their meaning from slave-holders. The "religion of the south" and slavery. Whether slavery was inconsistent with Christian practice was debated by white people, but African Americans uniformly deemed slavery a contradiction in a Christian nation, as we read in these narratives from Frederick Douglass, Harriet Jacobs, Austin Steward, and William J. Anderson, published between and Perhaps ten percent of the enslaved Africans transported to the Americas were Muslim. Omar ibn Said was an educated Muslim born about in Futa Toro modern Senegal , captured at age 37, and brought to South Carolina to be sold. Although he converted to Christianity, his pastor and later scholars conclude that he also maintained his Muslim faith throughout his life. His brief autobiography is presented here in full. Origins of the African Methodist Episcopal Church. The events that impelled freemen in Philadelphia to create an independent black church in and later the first organized black denomination—the African Methodist Episcopal Church, in —are described by founder Rev. Richard Allen in his narrative, published posthumously in In addition to the discussion questions below, consider the questions in 2, *Plantation Community*, as you study the wide variety of African American religious practices before emancipation. Discussion questions What sources of strength and identity did African Americans, enslaved and free, achieve through their religious faith and practice? How did religious practice express worship of the divine? In the WPA narratives, what range of permitted and secret religious expression do you find? How did they differ? Why do some former slaves praise what others condemn? How did Christianity, as packaged for the enslaved, encourage them to interpret their bondage? What communal bonds are emphasized in the six religious songs from *Slave Songs of the United States*? Were you familiar with these songs? Summarize the Christian, Muslim, and "voodoo" practices of enslaved African Americans in these readings. Together, what do they suggest about the communal expression of religious belief? What blending of faiths and practices do you find in these readings? How do the authors explain the blending to themselves and to others? What do the blendings suggest about the religious practice of any enslaved people? How did free blacks pursue religious independence in the northern states? How did they act on the conviction that slavery contradicted the ideals of a Christian nation? How did they construct their messages for their chosen audiences? Why did Richard Allen argue that his new black church should remain Methodist and not affiliate with another Christian denomination? Among the other black Christians in this section, who would agree and disagree with him? How did enslaved and free African Americans pursue religious practice on their terms, not the terms of white slaveholders or church officials? What risks did this

present? How did white people respond to the variety of African American religious beliefs and practice? What accounts for the differences in their responses? Create dialogues in which these former slaves discuss their differing perspectives on these topics:

**Chapter 6 : Religion & Politics**

*"Christian Identity" is the name of a religious movement uniting many of the white supremacist groups in the United States. Identity's teachers promote racism and sometimes violence. Their roots are deeply embedded in movements such as the Ku Klux Klan and the Nazis.*

Additionally, several measures illustrate the distinctiveness of the black community when it comes to religious practices and beliefs. On each of these measures, African-Americans stand out as the most religiously committed racial or ethnic group in the nation. The Landscape Survey also shows that the link between religion and some social and political attitudes in the African-American community is very similar to that seen among the population overall. For instance, just as in the general public, African-Americans who are more religiously observant as defined by frequency of worship service attendance and the importance of religion in their lives are more likely to oppose abortion and homosexuality and more likely to report higher levels of conservative ideology. It is important to emphasize, however, that differences on political and social issues across religious groups within the African-American community tend to be smaller than among the population overall. Fewer members of other religious groups express these views. On a variety of other questions, including political party identification and opinions about the proper role of government in providing services to the citizenry and assistance to the poor, there are few differences in the views of African-Americans across religious groups. Perhaps most strikingly, the partisan leanings of African-Americans from every religious background tilt heavily in the Democratic direction. By a wide margin, African-Americans stand out as the most Protestant racial and ethnic group in the U. But Protestantism in the U. Rather, it is divided into three distinct traditions – evangelical Protestant churches, mainline Protestant churches and historically black Protestant churches. By several measures, including importance of religion in life, attendance at religious services and frequency of prayer, the historically black Protestant group is among the most religiously observant traditions. In fact, on these and other measures of religious practices and beliefs, members of historically black Protestant churches tend to resemble members of evangelical Protestant churches, another highly religious group. African-American women also stand out for their high level of religious commitment. No group of men or women from any other racial or ethnic background exhibits comparably high levels of religious observance. Age African-Americans are more likely to be affiliated with a faith compared with the public overall, but as with the general population, younger African-Americans are more likely than their older counterparts to report being unaffiliated with a religion. Additionally, black college graduates are somewhat more likely to be part of mainline Protestant and Catholic churches as compared with those from other educational backgrounds. In the Midwest and the Northeast, the number of African-Americans who are unaffiliated with any particular religion is similar to the share of the general population in these regions that is religiously unaffiliated. By contrast, in the South and the West, African-Americans are less likely to be unaffiliated compared with the overall population. Religious Beliefs and Practices In many ways, African-Americans are significantly more religious than the general population, with the vast majority considering religion very important in their lives. African-Americans also are more religiously observant on a variety of other measures, from frequency of prayer and worship service attendance to belief in God. Consistent with this, members of historically black churches are among the most likely of any religious group to say religion is very important in their lives. Across a wide variety of religious groups, black members are more likely than members of their faiths overall to say religion is very important to them. The difference is even greater among members of mainline Protestant churches. Religion also is important in the lives of many African-Americans who are not affiliated with any particular religion. Religious Practices African-Americans attend religious services and pray more frequently than the general population. This pattern is seen across most major religious traditions. Perhaps most interestingly, unaffiliated African-Americans attend religious services and pray in much higher numbers than the unaffiliated population overall. Religious Beliefs African-Americans also express higher levels of religious belief than do Americans overall. These views are held by the overwhelming majority of members of historically black churches. But even African-Americans

who are unaffiliated with any religion consistently express higher levels of religious beliefs compared with the unaffiliated public overall. For instance, black members of evangelical Protestant churches and the more religiously observant express more conservative views than those who are unaffiliated with any particular religion or are less religiously observant. But these religiously based differences tend to be smaller in the African-American community than in the population as a whole. And on some political issues, there are few religious divides to speak of within the black community. Perhaps the most striking of these is partisanship, with the vast majority of African-Americans of all religious backgrounds expressing support for the Democratic Party. Members of evangelical churches and the most religiously committed members of all religious groups are most likely to describe themselves as conservative, while those who are unaffiliated and less religiously committed are among the least likely to describe themselves as such. While this is true among both African-Americans and the general population, these differences are much smaller among African-Americans. For example, among African-Americans, members of evangelical churches and those who are most religiously observant are just as likely to describe their ideology as moderate as to say they are conservative; by contrast, among the general population, the same groups are much more likely to say they are conservative than moderate or liberal. Social Issues Similar links exist among African-Americans as among the general population when it comes to religion and views on social issues such as abortion and homosexuality. But once again, the religiously based differences on these issues are less pronounced among African-Americans than in the overall population. Among both African-Americans and the general population, those who are most religiously observant are more likely to think that abortion should be illegal. The same is true when it comes to religious observance, with the most religiously observant African-Americans most likely to say that homosexuality should be discouraged, a similar pattern as seen among the overall population. But, once again, the differences between the most and least religiously observant are more pronounced in the population overall than among African-Americans. Among both African-Americans and whites, however, evangelical Protestants are much more opposed to gay marriage than are mainline Protestants. Even though African-Americans generally are comfortable with the notion that politics should be influenced and informed by religion, they also support certain limitations on the mingling of politics and religious institutions. Among the population overall, two-thirds take this point of view. Partisanship Regardless of their religious background, African-Americans overwhelmingly support the Democratic Party. Across all religious groups, at least two-thirds of African-Americans express support for the Democratic Party. African-Americans also support the Democrats by wide margins regardless of their overall level of religious commitment; in the general population, by contrast, religious commitment is linked with differences in party affiliation. No such gaps are seen within the African-American community, where huge majorities favor the Democratic Party regardless of their level of religious commitment. Role of Government Most African-Americans across all major religious traditions, including those who are unaffiliated, prefer a bigger government that provides more services to a smaller government providing fewer services. Detailed tables for the data displayed in graphical format are available in the appendix PDF.

Chapter 7 : African-American culture - Wikipedia

*The US government has declared "black identity extremists" a violent threat, according to a leaked report from the FBI's counter-terrorism division. religion, or the exercise of First.*

A maquette of a statue, at City Hall, London which stands as a permanent slavery memorial. Psychiatrist Frantz Fanon explored the conscious and unconscious forces behind colonialism. In his seminal works, *Black Skin White Masks* and *Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon describes the psychic brutality that racism unleashes on both the oppressed and the oppressor. Born in Martinique, he used colonised Algeria as his template to better understand the dynamics of race, identity, and liberation. It is from *Black Skin White Masks* that many of his indelible quotes are culled. Identity for the oppressed is always an almost indefinable and perplexing concept. He reinvents himself or adapts to the role he is given by an outside structure. Fanon captures this internal crisis eloquently: Either way, I am locked in to the infernal cycle. Slavery and racism destroy the ego and leaves the victim scrambling to heal and find relevance. By a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the people, and distorts, disfigures and destroys it. And as we know, in this matter many are called but few chosen. One such mechanism is sublimation of which religion is the perfect example. Interestingly, today, the oppressor comes in all colours and shades. Freire states that the interests of the oppressors lie in changing the consciousness of the oppressed, not the situation which oppresses them. Again, once that consciousness takes on a religious, transcendental bent, the oppressed is fair game for the kind of political and economic manipulation that we see played out in former colonies. Simply supplanting Christianity with Afrocentric religions, while perceptually encouraging, does little to address the identity question. Replacing one institution with another cannot bring healing to the ego and true independence. If only it were that simple. A black God or a black Saviour still leaves us looking outward for salvation. Self or identity cannot, and should not, be defined, or fashioned, by outside markers. The drive to be creative, to realise our potential and thereby advance society, are internally based. This brings us to the timeless call to enlightenment: My enlightenment is an individualistic, unique reality in the same way the realities celebrated in scripture are unique to its sages, apostles, holy men, and villains. Unfortunately, their realities, products of their own psycho dynamic experiences, are foisted upon us as truths; surely their truths, but not necessarily mine. Clearly, our individual spirit, our path to our enlightenment, is hijacked by religious institutions. Through a deliberate and detailed process of self-analysis, we must work towards our own realisation that is distinct from the collective. This is identity in its truest sense. And this authenticity is unattainable inside the walls of institutions. How could you be black and Christian? My response transcends race and Christianity. It is really an indictment on all religions by virtue of their very constitution. Fear of breaking free from the deftly designed mental siege called religion is far greater than escaping from the plantation. It was Heraclitus BC who popularised the philosophy of becoming. It advances that ideas, concepts, new realities, new experiences are part of the evolutionary patterns of life. These we cannot experience within institutions that present a priori assumptions as truths. Christianity, and its hierarchical construct, its fantastical tale of creation, and its apocalyptic, eschatological, and salvific dogmas - all without evidentiary basis - cannot forever quiet the natural impulse to think, reason, analyse, and ultimately evolve.

**Chapter 8 : America's Changing Religious Identity | PRRI**

*The use of terms like "black identity extremists" is part of a long-standing FBI attempt to define a movement where none exists. "Basically, it's black people who scare them," German said.*

What are the common misconceptions concerning Jesus that have been leveled at the black community? By Charles Gilmer When you hear the name "Jesus" what images and thoughts come to mind? Devotion to Jesus has been a large part of the African-American experience. The black church has been and continues to be a powerful force in the African-American community. But many are questioning the propriety of African Americans following Jesus. Should we, as black people, follow this Jesus? Some suggest that Jesus was a foreign deity forced upon our forefathers and mothers. Others suggest that worshiping Jesus has been nothing more than a psychological narcotic to deaden the pain of our oppressed existence. How should we view that influence as we approach a new chapter of our history? One of the most frequently posed challenges is directed at this book. Is the Bible credible? Several works have been done to chronicle these instances. Niger simply means "black. John Mbiti outlines the fact that the message of Jesus penetrated Africa before it ever reached Europe. There is clear, historical documentation of the church in Africa by the third century. Christianity was the dominant religion in North Africa and most notably Egypt. Egyptian and North African scholars such as Clement, Origen, Tertullian, and Athanasius are widely recognized as fathers of the church. By the year , Egypt had more than a million Christians. In the sixth century, Christianity spread to the Nubian Kingdoms, soon becoming the dominant religion. The Christian Nubian Kingdoms survived for years, resisting attempted domination by Muslim conquerors for of those years. Though persecuted, their presence is testimony to the historicity of Christianity in Africa. The first African Christians were not American slaves. The Christian heritage in Africa goes all the way back to the days of the Bible itself. Arab Muslims had been conducting a slave trade for hundreds of years before Europeans arrived on the west coast of Africa. Second, the slave traders themselves seldom claimed to be devout men, even though they came from "Christian nations. He led the fight against the slave trade in Parliament because of his commitment to Jesus Christ. His is an incredible story of sacrifice and dedication to truth and justice for African people. While it took his entire life to win this victory, win he did. While there was vocal Christian protest against the slave trade and much of the abolitionist movement was spear-headed by Christian people, there were also many Christians who defended slavery. The issue of slavery grew more divisive, and eventually most of the major Protestant denominations divided over the issue. This actually set the stage for the Civil War. While many factors contributed to the onset of the Civil War, no one can argue that slavery was not a principle cause for the split of the nation, South from North. Yet it is clear that as the war dragged on, he began to sense the larger drama that was being played out via the conflict. In his Second Inaugural Address, Lincoln spoke eloquently of his growing belief that God was judging the United States for indulging the wicked institution of slavery. It is intriguing to note that our nation lost more lives in that one conflict than in all its other wars combined. Perhaps we can conclude that God did not turn a blind eye to the sufferings of the slaves, nor did He wink at the conduct of those who oppressed African people in America. What Slaves Discovered in the Bible What was the attitude of the slaves through all of this? How could our forefathers embrace the religion of their oppressors? Part of the rationalization of the slave trade was to "civilize" and "Christianize" the Africans. Missionary efforts among the slaves were allowed because owners assumed that Christianity would make slaves better workers. In the course of this instruction, the slaves discovered something. While the Bible did teach, "Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear," it also said, "And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both your Master and theirs is in heaven and there is no favoritism with him. Too many masters wanted their slaves to submit to the commands of Scripture but were unwilling to live by those commands themselves. The slaves discovered this contradiction but did not allow that to interfere with receiving the transcendent truth of the Bible. In its pages they found hope, courage, strength and comfort. The Negro spirituals are the legacy of the faith of those who, from an earthly standpoint, had cause for despair. The slaves who turned to Jesus knew the difference between some of

the versions of Christianity they were seeing practiced and the Christianity they were hearing described in the Bible. Jesus provided the hope and power they needed to survive slavery. This faith inspired leaders to respond courageously to the problems of our people. These leaders were the likes of Harriet Tubman, Frederick Douglass, Sojourner Truth, and the thousands of former slaves who enlisted in the Union Army to fight for their freedom. The liberating dynamic of the Bible caused the Southern states to place restrictions on missionary activities among the slaves, forbidding reading instruction and limiting preaching by slave preachers. They also began to put restrictions on slave worship services. The spiritual "Steal Away" signaled the calling of a worship service to be held in the "hush arbors" outside of the scrutiny of the master or his overseers. In these hush arbors gathering places in the seclusion of the woods our forefathers and mothers could revel in the truth that they were not brute beasts with no more value than an ox or an ass. No, the Bible taught them that they were children of the Most High God, citizens of His heavenly kingdom, and that they had inherent value as humans. When they entered into prayer and worship, they experienced a fleeting but galvanizing foretaste of an eventual eternal reward. After the hope and turmoil of the Reconstruction period, black Americans again found themselves being systematically and legally oppressed. Unfortunately, once again, many who claimed to be Christians were involved in the reign of terror, which sought to keep African Americans in their place. The Southern white church was at best silent, and at worse, actively defending the conduct of those who were marauding among, intimidating, and lynching our people. Black societies and businesses were seldom allowed to survive. The black community found refuge in the church. Although there were exceptions, like the 16th Street Baptist Church bombing in Birmingham, the church provided some protection from those who would harm black people. And in the church our people found the peace, comfort and strength previously cultivated in the hush arbors. The vibrancy and progressive power of the black church is well documented. It was in the churches that the black colleges were conceived, given birth and prayed for. It was the clergy who often provided the leadership for the black community at large. The powerful building effect of the African-American church cannot be disputed. And it was the church that gave us our drum major for justice, the Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. Those who suggest that Christianity has been a debilitating and pacifying force in the African-American community are ignoring the evidence. The God of the Bible has always been a source of comfort, strength and hope for our people. Faith in Jesus Christ has not created passivity but rather activism in thousands of African Americans. It is true that there have been those who have attempted to justify their mistreatment of us on the basis of the Bible. But this view has never held up to honest scrutiny. It is true that some of our people have listened to lies that have been told us, and to misinterpretations of biblical passages, thereby developing twisted and unhealthy views of themselves and of our people. But those who have followed Jesus Christ have been some of our most effective leaders, our most impressive achievers, and our most eloquent spokespeople. By their own testimony, these African-American Christians declare that it was their relationship with Jesus that fueled their struggle, energized their activism, and gave them hope for a better future for our people. Why does the African-American church struggle to gain the allegiance of the emerging generation? The evolution of the Civil Rights Movement set up young African Americans for a collective crisis of faith. The post-World War II thrust for civil rights found no better incubator than the black churches of the South. Those early mass meetings were characterized by prayer, the singing of hymns and spirituals, and an orderliness of conduct that revealed the Christian influence of the attendees. Yet, the white church failed to support his pleas for justice, freedom and equal treatment. It was the government, not the white church, that secured the rights for which so many had prayed, marched and shed blood. This opened the door for those who wanted to disparage the Christian message. Many progressive whites befriended the Civil Rights leadership, becoming our allies in the struggle. Youthful leadership emerged, enraged by the cowardice and hypocrisy of the white church, to declare the need for new thinking. The new allies were quick to provide alternative ideologies, like dialectical Marxism, radical feminism and political liberalism. The patience of the previous generations began to be interpreted as weakness -- a weakness often attributed to the gentle nature of Christianity. A generation of African Americans began to drift away from the church. These first recipients of the benefits of desegregation were facing new challenges, choosing from previously unheard of opportunities and experiencing unprecedented freedom. The nation had

grudgingly removed the obstacles to broader exploration and the younger crowd was ready to wander. The black church struggled to effectively speak to those who had left its confines. What has been the outcome? Those who have not had access or failed to capitalize on the new opportunities are left without hope for a better future. And the popular notion that Jesus has nothing to offer created a vacuum of moral authority. No longer do we look to God as the one to whom we are accountable. We are our own authority. Some even teach that "The black man is God.

**Chapter 9 : Dianne M. Stewart**

*What sources of strength and identity did African Americans, enslaved and free, achieve through their religious faith and practice? How did religious practice express worship of the divine? strivings for freedom? rejection of white authority? personal despair? communal strength?*

Personal use only; commercial use is strictly prohibited for details see Privacy Policy and Legal Notice. The New World enslavement of diverse African peoples and the cultural encounter with Europeans and Native Americans produced distinctive religious perspectives that aided individuals and communities in persevering under the dehumanization of slavery and oppression. As African Americans embraced Christianity beginning in the 18th century, especially after , they gathered in independent church communities and created larger denominational structures such as the African Methodist Episcopal Church, the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church, and the National Baptist Convention. These churches and denominations became significant arenas for spiritual support, educational opportunity, economic development, and political activism. Black religious institutions served as contexts in which African Americans made meaning of the experience of enslavement, interpreted their relationship to Africa, and charted a vision for a collective future. The early 20th century saw the emergence of new religious opportunities as increasing numbers of African Americans turned to Holiness and Pentecostal churches, drawn by the focus on baptism in the Holy Spirit and enthusiastic worship that sometimes involved speaking in tongues. The Great Migration of southern blacks to southern and northern cities fostered the development of a variety of religious options outside of Christianity. Groups such as the Moorish Science Temple and the Nation of Islam, whose leaders taught that Islam was the true religion of people of African descent, and congregations of Ethiopian Hebrews promoting Judaism as the heritage of black people, were founded in this period. Earlyth-century African American religion was also marked by significant cultural developments as ministers, musicians, actors, and other performers turned to new media, such as radio, records, and film, to contribute to religious life. Black religious leaders emerged as prominent spokespeople for the cause and others as vocal critics of the goal of racial integration, as in the case of the Nation of Islam and religious advocates of Black Power. The second half of the 20th century and the early 21st-first century saw new religious diversity as a result of immigration and cultural transformations within African American Christianity with the rise of megachurches and televangelism. African American , African American religions , black churches , new religious movements , Civil Rights movement , women and religion , religion and politics Enslavement and Religious Transformation African American religious cultures were born in the crucible of American slavery, a system that not only ruptured direct connections to African history, culture, and religious community, but also set the context for the emergence of transformed and new religious systems. Africans brought forcibly to the Americas came from a variety of cultural, linguistic, and religious environments in West and West Central Africa. Most practiced ancient religious traditions focused on maintaining harmonious relationships with nature and supernatural beings, including gods, spirits, and ancestors. Some enslaved Africans in America, especially those from the Senegambia region, were Muslim while others, such as those from the West African kingdom of Kongo who had come into contact with the Portuguese, were Catholic. African traditional religions dominated among those pressed into New World slavery, however, and these worldviews would serve as the ground for the development of varied African diaspora religious cultures. The horrors of the Middle Passage in which more than 10 million Africans were transported to the Americas and consigned to chattel slavery made it impossible to perpetuate language, culture, and religion as they had existed in African contexts. The cultural and religious resources they brought with them proved resilient and adaptable, however, and would contribute to the worldviews and practices that emerged under American slavery. Change over time, regional differences, and religious context are important considerations for understanding how African American religious cultures took shape in antebellum America and why they differ in significant ways from other parts of the African diaspora. The large number of Africans transported to the Caribbean and Latin America and the longer duration of the trade in some regions meant that cultural and religious ties here were more vibrant than in the North American colonies, where only 5

percent of those transported from Africa arrived, primarily in the period from to In addition, the predominance of Catholicism in the French and Spanish colonies created a context in which enslaved Africans were able to combine their ritual work to maintain connections to gods and spirits with veneration of the Catholic saints. Africans in the North American colonies were most likely to be enslaved by Protestant Europeans, who were more resistant to such blended religious practices. Although enslaved Africans in North America did not reproduce the varied religious systems of West and West Central Africa, these worldviews were among the many resources on which they drew to produce distinctive African American cultures, identity, and forms of resistance. Invested economically in the institution of slavery and committed to the notion of the inferiority of Africans, many slaveholders worried that conversion would require manumission and disrupt racial hierarchy. Even with assurance from church and political leaders that conversion to Christianity did not mandate freedom for the enslaved, resistance among slaveholders remained strong, as white Anglican cleric Francis Le Jau found in his mission work in earlyth-century South Carolina, where the brutality of the slave system shocked him. Le Jau also faced discomfort in a range of forms by slaveholders to shared religious commitment with blacks, including the refusal of one man to take Communion when enslaved Africans were at the Holy Table and queries from a woman about whether she would be forced to see her slaves in heaven. Many European Americans could not imagine African Americans having the capacity to understand Christianity and also feared that extending baptism and Christian fellowship would convince the enslaved of their equality to whites. Consequently, the substance of Christian teaching that most missionaries and slaveholders conveyed focused not on liberation and equality but on divinely ordained racial hierarchy. It is not surprising that this sort of theological framework did not appeal to the majority of enslaved African Americans in colonial America. The ranks of the evangelical Baptists and Methodists grew through the spread of the revivals and, motivated by a commitment to spiritual equality, some white Baptists and Methodists questioned the moral grounds of slavery. Ultimately, the opposition to abolition of most southern white Christian slaveholders motivated these denominations to step back from their antislavery positions. Despite the turn away from an explicitly antislavery Christian posture, Baptists and Methodists supported the development of black Christian leadership, licensing African American men to preach and helping to foster the beginnings of institutional life among black Christians. The revivals of the Second Great Awakening of the late 18th and early 19th centuries extended the geographic reach of evangelicalism as the nation expanded into new territory and also drew increasing numbers of African Americans to Christianity. In enthusiastic and embodied communal worship they also sang spirituals that spoke of sorrow, joy, justice, salvation, and liberation, and they danced the ring shout in a counterclockwise circular movement meant to make the Holy Spirit present. Slave religion, then, served as a source of individual and communal comfort and the means to endure the brutality of slavery. Black abolitionists, such as lecturer and journalist Maria W. Stewart “, who grounded her claims for social justice in biblical exegesis, and David Walker “, whose Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World warned of divine punishment on America for the sins of oppression, exemplified this approach. In other instances, religion fostered open rebellion against slavery, as with the planned revolt in in Richmond, Virginia, that participants organized in religious meetings led by Gabriel Prosser “, the appeal to scripture and use of religious meetings to plan the aborted revolt of Denmark Vesey “ in South Carolina in , and the rebellion in Northampton, Virginia, organized by religious visionary and preacher Nat Turner “ Even as the influence of religion on the men who led these rebellions against slavery is clear, evidence also exists that Christianity served to accommodate some enslaved African Americans to their status, as demonstrated in the address of enslaved poet and preacher Jupiter Hammon “ in which he enjoined enslaved blacks to be the obedient servants he felt Christ called them to be and await their reward in heaven. Conjure, derived from West Central African ritual work to harness the power of the natural and spiritual world to protect, heal, and sometimes harm, was a feature of African American culture, as were other folk healing practices using roots and herbs. Islam was also part of the religious world of enslaved Africans in the antebellum American South, with the relatively small number of Muslims struggling to maintain their religious practices, create community, and preserve the Arabic language across generations. Muslims such as Omar ibn Said c. Taken together, this range of religious expressions provided resources for the development

of culture in common, a sense of collective identity as African Americans, and affirmation of black humanity. Early independent black Baptist churches include the Silver Bluff, Georgia, church led in the s by David George c. The Baptist framework appealed to those in bondage because its structure of congregational autonomy supported local leadership and independence. Although these formerly enslaved men and their largely enslaved congregants faced monitoring and restrictions on religious practice, the institutions they founded became important sites promoting African American interpretations of Christianity that affirmed the humanity of black people. Free black Baptists in northern states, where slavery was abolished gradually following the American Revolution, also established important congregations. In many cases, black Methodists founded independent congregations in response to the racism they experienced in the predominantly white congregations to which they belonged. In Philadelphia, Richard Allen ‐, a former slave and licensed Methodist preacher, belonged to the predominantly white St. Allen, along with Absalom Jones ‐, another former slave and lay preacher, and other black congregants objected to the increasing discrimination they suffered in their home church, marked most clearly by the new policy relegating black members to the church balcony. Two congregations emerged from this movement, reflecting the varied theological and institutional interests among the former members of St. One contingent founded the African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas in with Absalom Jones, the first African American to be ordained an Episcopal priest, as its first rector, and the other formed Bethel African Methodist Episcopal Church in with Allen as its pastor. In Allen called together the leaders of a number of other black Methodist congregations in the region and they formed the African Methodist Episcopal AME Church, the first black denomination in America, with Allen as the first bishop. Conflicts between leaders of various contingents of African Methodists led Varick and Zion Church to organize a small group of independent black Methodist congregations in under the denominational umbrella of the African Methodist Episcopal Zion Church. Clergy and members of the AME and AME Zion Churches often became public voices on pressing issues, a role that highlights the significance of churches in fostering black leadership throughout African American history. African American denominations also contributed to black public life and culture throughout the 19th century by creating and supporting a range of economic enterprises, including publishing houses that produced journals and newspapers, including the AME Church Review, the Christian Recorder, and the Star of Zion, that covered religious and secular issues. By the end of the 19th century, black denominations also established a range of educational institutions. From their founding moments, then, independent African American denominations served as more than spiritual homes for black Christians; they also offered education, opportunity for economic development, a platform for political advocacy, and an environment that supported a collective sense of peoplehood. Black women preachers such as Jarena Lee b. Grounding their insistence on a right to leadership in both biblical interpretation and the claim to have experienced a direct call from God, Lee and other 19th-century preaching women in the AME and AME Zion Churches called their denominations to live up to their stated missions of proclaiming the equality of all under God. Facing resistance from the male leadership of their churches and from many male and female members, these women persisted in their work as itinerant evangelists and some published spiritual narratives to recount their experiences and promote their claims. Zion became the first black denomination to ordain women when Julia Foote ‐ was ordained a deacon in , a status women in the AME Church gained in Despite the limited access to formal leadership roles, women within these independent black church denominations, who constituted the majority of members, were active contributors to the life of the church, serving as fundraisers, evangelists, and missionaries, for example. Culture and class differences sometimes led to conflict, however, as AME Church leaders sought to restrain the enthusiasm of southern black worship and impose their own standards of respectability. The Reconstruction period also saw the founding of the Colored now Christian Methodist Episcopal Church in in Jackson, Tennessee, by former enslaved members of the white-controlled Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Drawing together independent black Baptist congregations and mission and educational societies, the NBC emerged at its founding moment in Atlanta under the leadership of former slave Elias C. In addition, black Baptist women in the 19th and early 20th centuries contributed to the life of the church as individual evangelists or as licensed preachers. Although the women of the WC and the NBC at large did not organize to

press for ordination, black Baptist women nevertheless initiated significant public discussions within their denomination about religion, gender, and equality. Some African Americans found spiritual homes in predominantly white churches, including Methodist, Presbyterian, Congregationalist, and Episcopal denominations, drawn by family ties, theological appeal, or style of worship. For many who had been enslaved in regions with large Roman Catholic populations, Catholicism was the dominant culture that shaped their religious lives. As with other predominantly white denominations, access to leadership in Roman Catholicism was often restricted and African American men found it difficult to gain admission to the priesthood. A few prominent black priests made their mark on 19th-century black Catholic life, however, including former Missouri slave August Tolton , who was ordained in Rome in , and Charles Randolph Uncles of Baltimore, who became the first African American ordained in the United States. In a number of important instances, black women were successful in founding religious orders through which they could pursue their religious vocations. Although the orders remained small, black Catholic sisters were visible figures in 19th-century African American Catholic life. African American lay Catholics organized at the end of the 19th century to represent their interests as a group to the church at large and, despite experiences of racism and exclusion, to promote Catholicism among black Protestants as a universal and inclusive tradition. Former slave and Ohio journalist Daniel A. Rudd founded The American Catholic Tribune in to promote black Catholic interests, and he stood at the forefront of the Colored Catholic Congress movement that called black Catholics together from to to discuss their status within the church and to strategize to oppose racism in church and society. Christian Mission at Home and Abroad In the late 19th century, African American denominations turned their attention to Africa as a mission site and, in some instances, as a place to settle and pursue black self-governance. While black missionaries had worked through white mission societies earlier in the century, the support of black-led denominational structures made additional connections to Africa possible and allowed African Americans to frame their work in ways that spoke directly to their concerns. Where the biblical story of the Exodus had provided a map of meaning and a ground for hope for many enslaved and free African Americans in the antebellum period, after the end of slavery African American Christians looked to the Bible for other sources of inspiration and knowledge about their future. Some interpreted Psalm The American Colonization Society ACS , founded in by northern and southern whites concerned about growing numbers of free people of color in the United States, advocated transporting free blacks to Africa and, to achieve that goal, established a settlement that would eventually become part of Liberia. The ACS encouraged free blacks to emigrate and secured funds to purchase the freedom of enslaved people on the condition that they agree to be transported to Africa. Some individuals, such as founding member Daniel Coker , argued that prospects for free blacks would be better in Africa given restricted opportunities in the United States. Most AME leaders opposed colonization, however, holding that as Americans they should not have to leave the country of their birth to secure liberty and rights. Moreover, many argued, it would be devastating to the cause of abolition for free blacks, who could serve as advocates for the enslaved to leave. The denomination formally condemned the colonization scheme; nevertheless, some members continued to find the idea appealing. In Coker joined with the ACS to embark on missionary work in Sierra Leone, traveling aboard the Elizabeth with eighty-five other colonists in a largely unsuccessful venture. In the s AME clergy and church members constituted part of the Liberian Exodus movement in which a number of groups, most famously the company of people aboard the Azor that sailed from Charleston to Monrovia in , gave up on the possibility of safety and prosperity in America and sought to build lives and communities elsewhere. Black Methodists, such as internationally recognized traveling evangelist Amanda Berry Smith , also engaged in independent missionary work, largely without institutional support. In AME bishop Henry McNeal Turner traveled to West Africa and southern Africa to incorporate into the denomination the churches that earlier missionaries had established. In Levi J. In Carey traveled to Sierra Leone as a missionary, accompanied by his wife, two children, and twenty members of his congregation. The group settled in Liberia the following year and Carey founded Providence Baptist Church in Monrovia, which he pastored until his death in Later black Baptists saw Carey as a model for their work, establishing the Lott Carey Foreign Mission Convention in , which, along with state mission boards, supported Baptist missions. African American members of predominantly white denominations also

engaged in missionary work in Africa, including Virginia native and ordained Presbyterian minister William H. Incorporating Africans into their biblical interpretations of the divine plan for black Christianity to lead the way to human redemption, missionaries and colonists rejected African traditional religions and worked to transform African societies according to the standards of Western Christian civilization. Even many of those who learned indigenous languages and attended to the social, economic, and medical needs of Africans in the regions of their missionary work still viewed indigenous religious and cultural systems as heathen and in need of reform.