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## White Christianity and Black Commitment: A Comment on the Power of Faith and Socialization

This essay is a part of a continuing effort to analyze and understand, and to theorize about organized religion in the life and culture of Blackamerica. My presuppositions are 1) that there does exist a viable, identifiable black subculture in America; 2) that while this subculture shares with other ethnic groups and with the overculture in general a broad spectrum of experiences, values and institutionalized behavior patterns, there is a unique element in its history commonly defined as "the black experience;" and that 3) what is understood by the ingroup as "the black experience" is a principal motivational force in the development of a cultural black nationalism—which may be the prevailing mood characterizing the contemporary black community.

Now the nationalistic impulse is directed toward the appreciation and the elevation of whatever values and behavior thought of as unique to the black community, or as originating with black people, or as peculiarly appropriate to black ambience, style or projection. Implicit in this attitude, of course, is a sense of cultural solidarity with the "Black World" as well as an implicit devaluation of traditional "White" value constructs which are the by-products of the socialization process. It is at this point that the matter of the Christian religion becomes an issue of the most critical importance, for the prevailing values in the overculture derive, or are believed to derive, from a basic commitment to the Judeo-Christian tradition. If this belief is true, then cultural black-nationalism must not only imply a repudiation of prevailing social conventions, but of the religious values which undergird those conventions; or at least some of them.

Some contemporary black scholars in the positivistic tradition see religion as a false issue, the worst aspects of it being the preemption of too many good minds which might otherwise be turned to more pragmatic pursuits. Religion, they argue, whatever its source, and whatever its uses in the past is irrelevant today because black people have outgrown it. We do not need religion to define our problems or to prescribe a means of coping with them. We do need the total intellectual energies of the black community directed toward the alleviation of empirical conditions we can see and account for.

The black positivists are not alone in their desire to dismiss religion and

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get on with social change. Their impatience with religion is shared by black youth, but black youth are inclined to be more preemptory, although their reasons for dismissing religion are quite similar, at bedrock, to those of the black positivists. For the positivists, it is a matter of having outgrown God. For black youth, it is a matter of having outgrown history. For these latter, Christianity is "right out of the white man's bag of tricks," and Blacks have outgrown trickery. Hence, Christianity is left to those too young to understand and those too old to change. The basic difference between the black positivists and black youth is that black youth do not rule out summarily the legitimacy of some other religion for black people, but it must be a religion untainted by white association or white manipulation. It must be a genuine "black" religion, not simply a black patina on a "white happening." This is one reason why black youth have not identified in significant numbers with the new wave of "black religion" and its new "black theology" current in the United States. Black religion, they say, is still "Christianity," and Christianity is tainted, perhaps irretrievably so, by the manipulative racism with which it has been associated since it was first introduced to Blacks in America, thereafter to shackle them through their faith to centuries of servitude and depersonalization.

It is precisely this problem, the problem of the origin of the faith that troubles the contemporary black believer. Unlike the black positivist who has presumably reasoned through belief and beyond it, and unlike contemporary black youth which tends to dismiss the faith on *a priori* grounds which preclude the issue of belief or non-belief, the black believer *does* believe. And he *wants* to believe. But he may be at odds with himself precisely because he does believe. The problem is that whatever its classical expression may have been, and whatever its claim to ethical triumphs in other parts of the world, the prevailing Christian ethos in America has seldom functioned in the fair and equitable interests of black people as Blacks themselves perceive and understand those interests. In consequence, the nagging recollection that Blackamericans received the faith through their slavemasters, and then only after the Christianization of the slaves was clearly established as uniquely advantageous to the whole system of slave ownership,<sup>1</sup> is a constant irritant to the desire for conclusiveness. However certain he may be of the essential validity of the faith as both timeless and universal, and however firm his conviction that the faith transcends all attempts to manipulate it and turn it to private advantage, the persistent allegations that "Christianity is a white man's religion," or that "Christianity is a slave-making religion" seem solidly buttressed by the wearisome facts of experience.

Black ambivalence about the Christian religion is probably as old as black contact with the faith in America. That they found Christianity attractive at some level for whatever reason is most indisputably documented by the fact that at least 98% of all Blackamericans confessing any religion confess some form of Christianity; and by the fact that even today when religious affiliation is no longer socially or morally

compulsive, fully 95% of all Blacks in America admit to some connection with some faith, no matter how tenuous. But accepting the faith and accepting the conditions of the faith are not quite the same thing. For much of the black experience with Christianity, the Christian message to the black faithful could be typically illustrated by this quote from a Virginia clergyman in the early days of black proselytization:

Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters . . . with fear and trembling . . . as unto Christ. . . . Remember, God required this of you. . . . There is something so becoming and engaging in a modest, cheerful, good natured behavior that a little work done in that manner seems better done. . . . It also gains the goodwill and love of those you belong to. . . . Besides . . . your murmuring and grumbling is against God who hath placed you in their service. . . .<sup>2</sup>

Undoubtedly this message had a telling effect upon many who heard it. There were few competing messages of recognized authority, and what came from the pulpit of the white man's church was the revelatory wisdom of the white man's book. Who could gainsay it? Who could *understand* it? It had the imprimatur of the white man's God—the source of the white man's power, his wealth and his commission to rule. Who could risk ignoring it? Lunsford Lane was one of those who did:

There was one kind-hearted clergyman I used often to hear; he was very popular among the colored people. But after he had preached a sermon to us in which he urged from the Bible that it was the will of heaven that we should be slaves and our masters our owners, many of us left him, considering like the doubting disciple of old. This is a hard saying. Who can hear it?<sup>3</sup>

As Lane and some of his fellows left the white minister who offended them with his consignment of all Black Christians to the perpetual service of their white brothers in Christ, other Blacks left the white man's church for similar reasons. Some lost themselves in that "invisible institution"<sup>4</sup> which met in the swamps and forests remote from the intelligence of the Big House, safe from the noxious propaganda of the captive clergymen who came there to strengthen the doubtful hand of the slave master with the sure right hand of God. This "invisible institution" represented the Black Christians' covert rejection of the white church which rejected them. However, other Blacks organized their own institutional churches, which for the most part tended to replicate as nearly as possible the white churches which were their references.

It is interesting to note that when Richard Allen and his confreres shook the dust of St. George Methodist Church off their spiritual feet nearly 200 years ago, they did so because they had been dragged from their knees in that white institution while inadvertently praying in a part of the gallery reserved for white Christians.<sup>5</sup> Nevertheless, the church Allen founded soon thereafter was not only Christian, but Methodist, which can only suggest the depth of attachment to the faith and to a particular format of belief and practice embodied in institutional Methodism. It could still be argued with validity, of course, that Allen's African Methodist Episcopal Church represented a giant step in freeing black Christians from the religious tyranny of white Christianity, for despite the wholesale adoption of the Methodist discipline, Blacks were

finally to gain a measure of control of their own spiritual destiny, though not without a protracted struggle.<sup>6</sup> According to a public statement concerning the establishment of Bethel, the "Mother Church" of what was to become the first black denomination, its members were to "continue in union with, and subject to the government of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church in all ecclesiastical affairs except in the right to church property," and would accept "the rules, government, discipline and articles of faith of the Methodist Episcopal Church."<sup>7</sup> The pulpit at Bethel was under the control of an Elder of the St. George Methodist Episcopal Church, the white institution from which they had so lately detached themselves. Even so, the Blacks who retained their traditional affiliation with St. George's, hidden away in a corner of the gallery and proscribed in every activity though they were, felt called upon to denounce Richard Allen and to accuse him of leading his followers into a "segregated church!"<sup>8</sup>

The impact of Methodism upon Blacks was curiously phenomenal and often inconsistent. In 1822, following the discovery that Denmark Vesey and the principal conspirators involved in the plan to seize Charleston were members of the African Methodist Episcopal Church—founded by Richard Allen, the South Carolina authorities "suppressed that congregation and had its house of worship demolished."<sup>9</sup> On the other hand, there is a tradition that when Nat Turner ravaged the countryside on Southampton, Virginia in his bloody rebellion a decade later, he gave orders that "none of the people called Methodists" were to be harmed. Certainly Richard Allen's commitment to Methodism was second only to his commitment to Christianity. When the Free African Society which he founded with Absalom Jones offered him the honor of pastoring the first black Protestant Episcopal Church in history, "he declined the offer upon the ground that he was a Methodist."<sup>10</sup> When he left the Free African Society intent upon founding a Methodist Church, he did so with the conviction that:

There was no religious sect or denomination would suit the capacity of the colored people as well as the Methodists, for the plain and simple gospel suits best for the people; for the unlearned can understand, and the learned are sure to understand. . . . I could not be anything but a Methodist as I was born and awakened under them. . . . The Methodists were the first people that brought glad tidings to the colored people. I feel thankful that I have ever heard a Methodist preacher.<sup>11</sup>

Allen's sentiments were generally echoed by the black community. Within five years following the Christmas Conference of 1784 which formally established Methodism in America, one-fourth of the Methodist membership was black.<sup>12</sup> The Methodists split over the issue of slavery in 1844, but by the time the Civil War commenced in 1860, there were fully 200,000 Blacks in the southern wing of Methodism alone.<sup>13</sup>

This is not intended as a treatise on Blacks in the Methodist Church. Instead we are concerned more precisely with the phenomenon of Blacks in America choosing to be Christians at all, and once that choice was made, why Methodism proved particularly attractive. Because Blacks were involved in Methodism from its earliest appearance in America, and

because Methodism does not differ substantially from any other white Christian denomination in its practical approach to the issue of race, Methodism does lend itself as a convenient model in the illustration of the way in which Blacks in the presence of religious need and under pressure of prevailing social norms not only adopted the religion of their oppressors, but maintained membership in their religious organizations long after they were at liberty to pursue their separate destiny. Were there viable alternatives, or were the pragmatics of the situation such that every apparent choice was an illusion?

Much has been made of the issue of African survivals in the religion of Blackamericans. For years, the classic controversy between the followers of anthropologist Melville J. Herskovits<sup>14</sup> who thought he saw residuals of African religion in Blackamerican beliefs and practices, and those of sociologist E. Franklin Frazier,<sup>15</sup> who was equally certain that nothing of significance in African culture had survived the shattering impact of American slavery, has titillated scholars in the field, and kept the graduate students going back to the stacks to pore over the same meager data for the same misconclusions. The data are rendered irrelevant, and the issue of "survivals" in religion is mooted by the larger factors which play a part in what the African diaspora might have done and did in fact do in America.

First of all, a viable religion will be one which has a working relationship with the culture with which it interacts. This is not to say that it needs to be a "culture religion" in the sense that the values of the society and those of the religion are indistinguishable. It is to suggest, however, that religion has a practical base firmly rooted in the society which is both molds and reflects. Further, the needs and conditions, the fears, the anxieties, the hopes and aspirations to which a religion addresses itself must be real in the experience of the believers. If it is not, the faith will never be more than an aberration until or unless the culture is modified to fit the faith.

The evidence of this would seem to be impressive. The missionary zeal of Western Christians in Africa and elsewhere produced few Christians until other agents of socialization had first "westernized" segments of the native populations to the degree that Christianity simply made more sense in the context of a scheme of values *imported from the West* than did the indigenous religions. For example, in a society where the supply of men is short and there are no satisfactory factors of compensation such as we have developed here in the West, a religion that teaches monogamy and sexual indistinction will have no significant appeal until those cultural benefits and understandings which make monogamy and its attendant arrangements viable in the missionizing culture are sufficiently institutionalized in the culture being missionized. In short, there is nothing incidental about the structure of a religion and its relation to the society which produces it, or makes it its own. Christianity was swept out of North Africa by Islam after six centuries, not because Islam was a superior faith, but because Islam was more readily accommodated to the patterns of culture which antedated Christianity and its essentially *novel*

requirements by two thousand years, or more. A viable religion will be a functional expression of the society which births it, or at the very least it will be a religion in which the expectations of the faith are not incompatible with the existing norms, values and social experience by which that society is shaped and structured.

We may say, then, that whether there survived any elements of African religion in the dispersion of the African diaspora in America is not a salient aspect of the phenomenon of African Christianity in America. For almost a hundred years—from 1619 when the first Africans destined to become a part of an English community were landed at Jamestown, Virginia, until 1701 when the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts<sup>16</sup> turned its attention to the evangelization of Blacks, the Africans in America had little or no contact with Christianity. The arguments against the Christianization of Blacks, bond or free, South or North, were many and varied.<sup>17</sup> They cannot be offered here in detail, and my task will be limited to illustration of the fact that developing American Christianity felt no compelling need to complicate prevailing social and theological consensus by extending the gospel to black people. If Blacks were not outside the boundaries of God's grace, (and even this was a matter of dispute), they were simply not within the boundaries of American Christian interest and responsibility. There the matter rested until the advantages of a Christian servant class were made explicit in the pulpit and protected by law. Some American Christians flatly declared "that the Negro was not a man but a beast, and that he had no soul either to save or to lose."<sup>18</sup> In fact, so many white Christians considered "the Blacks as creatures of another species, who had no right to be instructed or admitted to the sacraments," that in eighteenth century New England, this was considered "the main 'obstacle to the conversion of these poor people.'" <sup>19</sup>

Many learned divines delivered themselves in debate on the subject, attracting vast crowds anxious to hear the issue declaimed.<sup>20</sup> Ultimately the decisions of the American Christians probably turned on other grounds. A European observer traveling in America in 1748 was struck by the indifference of the Americans concerning the spiritual condition of the Africans they had enslaved. He reported that the whites:

are partly led by the conceit of its being shameful, to have a spiritual brother or sister among so despicable a people, partly by thinking that they would not be able to keep their Negroes so meanly afterwards; and partly through fear of the Negroes growing too proud, on seeing themselves upon a level with their masters in religious matters.<sup>21</sup>

The notion of sharing a brotherhood in Christ with Africans, in this world, or any other, was certainly not a popular one. A common response to so incredible a suggestion was said to have been, "What, such as they? What, those black Dogs be made Christians? What, shall they be like us?" <sup>22</sup> "Is it possible," one distraught Christian lady wanted to know, "if any of my Negroes could go to heaven, and must I see them there?" <sup>23</sup>

Despite such prevailing attitudes about the possible social consequences of sharing the faith either in this world or in some other world to

come, the fundamental barriers to the instruction or proselytization of Blacks were basically economic. The slave system was geared to the premise that black labor was a perishable commodity, and that its extraction should be at a steady, continuous rate, to be interfered with only under the most compelling circumstances. "Negroes" "were . . . bought for the purpose of performing labor. What fact could be more obvious and natural, less demanding of explanation?"<sup>24</sup> In a system which routinely expected a slave mother to be back at her plow the same day she "dropped" (i.e., gave birth to) a child, "church time," including the time spent at instruction, prayer, or other religious requirements, was inevitably thought of as time garnered at the master's expense, even if it were taken when the slave normally would be resting and restoring himself for the next day's labor. Father John Carroll, a distinguished Catholic clergyman and one of the first bishops in America, was sensitive enough to be aware that the Blacks were " 'kept so constantly at work' that their spiritual nurture was neglected, with the result that they were 'very dull in faith and depraved in morals.' " But the good bishop like many of his Protestant counterparts was apparently not unduly troubled by the "dullness" and the "depravity" of the Blacks, for he owned, and presumably "kept constantly at work" several of them himself.<sup>25</sup> But the ultimate fear was that the slave himself could be forfeited as a unit of production if he confessed religion and became a Christian. It was not until this spectre of economic loss was laid finally to rest by religious authority and by law that a productive concern for the spiritual welfare of Blacks in America could take hold.<sup>26</sup>

Once the barriers were removed, there was no great rush among Blacks to become Christians. Despite nearly a hundred years of work by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel and other missionary-oriented organizations and individuals, if there was hungering and thirsting for the white man's religion, by the close of the American Revolution, such a yearning was still not reflected in the pews of the churches of New England. Samuel Hopkins of Newport attributed the absence of the Blacks to "their treatment by Christian masters," a treatment he thought well calculated to inflame the Blacks "with the deepest prejudices against the Christian religion."<sup>27</sup> By all the rules of logic the Reverend Hopkins should have been right, but religion is often paralogical, and raw prejudice has been known on occasion to produce a more accommodative response than benevolent disdain. Indeed, this may in part account for the fact that while the churches in New England has relatively little success in attracting black constituents, in the South, the Methodists and the Baptists "had gathered thousands of them into their churches before the end of the eighteenth century."<sup>28</sup> The truth is that there had been no stampe toward the churches in the South either, until the Great Awakening broadened the horizons of the faith to include a spectrum of values and experiences to which Blacks were prepared to respond. The Episcopal Church, dominant in the states where Blacks were most populous, failed to attract a significant black constituency.<sup>29</sup> The Presbyterians and the Quakers, both more benign in their attitudes

toward Blacks than either the Methodists or Baptists, had no more success than the Congregationalists of New England, who were considered "the most ardent friends" of the Blacks.<sup>30</sup> The Catholic Church had less impact upon the determination of the black religious experience in America than any major faith with the exception of Judaism. But then, in the developing years of the American Republic, both Catholics and Jews were themselves under suspicion.

The Great Awakening aroused in thousands of Americans, white and black, a new spiritual consciousness, which culminated, in many cases, in church affiliation—mainly with Baptists and Methodists. Many theories have been advanced offering to account for the black attraction to Christianity at this peculiar moment in American history. Most of them suggest that while New England Calvinism was too "cold" and too "reasoned" for the African mind, Catholicism and Episcopalianism were "too symbolic and ritualistic;" the Quakers "too meditative" and "too reflective." The burden of this argument, of course, rests upon the common presupposition that black people are exuberant by nature, impatient with symbolism and abstraction, and not given to reflection. The world in which the African is at home has always been conceived as a world of the senses, not a world of the mind. The practical effects of the limited nature of the African personality was therefore to postpone his significant religious involvement until the development of a religious expression more nearly matched with his capacities and inclinations. The Great Awakening, it is alleged, provided just that occasion: uncomplicated preaching, with simple, vivid stories of illustration, opportunities for substantial personal involvement and participation, a chance to give free reign to the spirit and the emotions—all of which were thought to replicate to some degree the normative African experience in religion. In consequence of their deviation from established norms of religious behavior, the practices of the Great Awakening came under fire from the traditionalists of that day. A prominent New England minister complained that:

So great has been the enthusiasm created by Wesley and Whitefield and tenant . . . the very Servants and Slaves pretend to extraordinary inspiration, and under veil thereof cherish their idle dispositions and in lieu of minding their respective businesses run rambling about to utter enthusiastic nonsense.<sup>31</sup>

Whether or not the religious style of the Great Awakening was as decisive for black involvement as is commonly held, the *social* style was undoubtedly critical. The practical effect of established church procedures which required on the one hand that one must first go through a period of instruction before admission, when at the same time most white Christians held firmly to the belief that Blacks were incapable of instruction, or that even if instructed could not fulfill the moral requirements of the faith,<sup>32</sup> was to keep Blacks out of the churches. In New England where church membership and citizenship were closely tied to each other, even free Blacks were effectively denied enfranchisement. In the South, the worrisome problem of the legal status of a Christian



slave was obviated and everywhere, the embarrassment of social equality at the level of religion was precluded by the simple act of ignoring Blacks as potential Christians. The Great Awakening was the first serious breach in the formidable fortress of religious formalism which protected the socio-economic infrastructure of the developing American commonwealth by being oblivious of the poor and the black.

Inevitably affected by the religious iconoclasm of the Awakening, Blacks rushed to become Christians at this point not so much because they could give vent to any "natural exuberance" or "native spiritual fervor," but *because the rules which kept them on the plantations and out of the churches were relaxed momentarily and the opportunity to enter into new kinds of relationships with others in their world of contact were presented.* The consequences of their religious involvement in the Great Awakening would be both immediate and far reaching. First of all the argument about the black man's spiritual and moral capacity would be mooted by the fact that thousands of Blacks had accepted Christianity and had been received as Christians. This was a *fait accompli*, impossible as it was, it *was*. Second, while the religious test of the Awakening was based on religious experience rather than theological and moral understanding, some modicum of "education" at the information level was inevitable in the process of Christian worship and fellowship. Third, *any* kind of Christian association, even that of master and slave, modified relationships and raised questions in the minds of all parties, which, whether spoken or unspoken, added to the weight of maintenance of the slave system. Finally, Christianity provided an organizational and a moral base for self-liberation which the slaves were certain to exploit. In short, once Blacks became Christians in large numbers, the wheels for the eventual dissolution of the slave system were irretrievably set in motion. Had the Great Awakening occurred a hundred years earlier, slavery as an institution might not have survived the American Revolution. This is not to overlook the probability that some Blacks were undoubtedly more securely accommodated to their condition through the instrumentality of religion. Such was inevitable, considering the susceptibility of Christian teachings to distortion and misinterpretation. However, the visible accommodation of some to a system of oppression could only become a factor in the flux of the efforts of liberation.

The Great Awakening was the first major step in the socialization of Blacks in America however inadvertent it may have been. It proved to be their first introduction to the significant values which make America what it is. Theretofore the vast majority of slaves were confined to the fields from "can to can't"—from daylight until dark. Their participation in the culture, and their understanding of it was hardly any different from what it would have been had they remained in Africa. Whatever religion they may have practiced in the remote corners of the plantation could do little for their present or their future in America. The Great Awakening was the beginning of a process of Americanization that transcended religion. The white man's religion became, with some modifications, the black man's religion.<sup>33</sup> There was no other way for the black man to find

meaningful participation in the white man's experiment in the West. A distinguished sociologist has said that:

Americans are generally religious, Southerners are more religious than the rest of the nation, and Negroes are more religious than white Southerners. The caste system forces Negroes to be exaggerated Americans.<sup>34</sup>

If this is true the Black's preference for Christianity in general, and for the Methodist and Baptist churches in particular probably needs no further explanation, for the black under caste was merely acting out its aspirations by adopting the prevailing religious expression with which they were in contact. But Arnold Toynbee reminds us that:

[The black man] may have found spiritual salvation in the white man's faith; he may have acquired the white man's culture . . . [and] economic technique, and yet it profits him nothing so long as he has not changed his skin.<sup>35</sup>

This seems to say that the "white man's" religion is not an effective shelter from the white man's more secular inclinations, and that consequently the black man's hopes for relief of his condition through conversion to Christianity was doomed to failure. Toynbee was right, but only if one takes the short view of history. There is no record that conversion brought liberty to a single slave throughout the long history of slavery in America. But there is a certain erosive quality in Christianity which over the long run reduces its disharmonies to insequence and grants its distortions into conformation. Once the slaves got religion it was inevitable that slavery as an institution was doomed. Neither the South nor the nation could thereafter restrain the spectrum of forces and counter forces loosed in contention for the definition and the establishment of a proper Christian ethic for America.

For the Blacks, religion became the primary occasion for social contact with whites, and in consequence, the most important instrument of socialization. The fact of religious capability not only granted souls to the Blacks, but in doing so automatically raised them to the level of men, and granted them some degree of moral responsibility. Religion did not raise the presumption of racial or social equality, and it did not presuppose Blacks to have a moral capacity equal to the white masters. Rather, the black Christian was simply expected to do the best he could with the equipment he had. God and society would forgive him the rest. But the aura of strangeness and teratism surrounding the black field hands was reduced, and the stage was inevitably set for the challenge and debate of notions long held to be above challenge and beyond debate.

In the meantime, the black Christian developed a quality of faith of unusual tenacity and resilience. In the face of the formidable contrary evidence of his own experience, he persisted in the belief that God was just, and that Christianity would be the instrument of his salvation if he died, or of his liberation in due course if he lived. Undoubtedly, the quality of his faith made the slave more tractable and patient, as Cotton Mather and all the other advocates of black spiritual involvement had predicted it would. But in the long run, the Christianization of the Blacks worked toward their liberation. Certainly it is true that Christianity in

America never approximated the ideals of the devout men and women who saw in the English experiment here an opportunity to perfect the faith in a way not possible amid the contentions and the distractions of seventeenth century Europe. The notion of religious perfection, like the spirit of the Enlightenment which stirred in the breasts of the Founding Fathers succumbed ultimately to a virulent racism which had gone unrecognized when the brave plans were made for the Atlantic Experiment. The Americans sacrificed the dream of religious perfection and the possibility of political democracy on the altar of a politico-economic scheme based on the presumption of racial superiority and racial manifest destiny. American Christianity became an ideological factor in the instrumentalization of this new and less respectable dream, and this is the Christianity the Blacks received. Yet, it is improbable that the espousal of any other religion by the Blacks would have hastened their liberation. Perceived differences between whites and Blacks already vast, would have been exaggerated. The suspicions of barbaric, paganistic practices, like those assigned to the medieval Jew, would have proliferated. Social distance, polar though it was, would have had no basis for modification, and the opportunity for physical contact and communication would have had no basis for regularity. The "peculiar institution" which shamed and desecrated America would have been indefinitely prolonged, and Christianity in America would be no further advanced than it is in contemporary South Africa, if indeed it could have come that far. Black faith in what was understood to be a white man's religion changed the course of our common history, and made of that religion our common faith.

## NOTES

1. See Cotton Mather's remarkable argument for *The Negro Christianized* in Gilbert Osofsky (ed), *The Burden of Race*. New York, Harper and Row, 1967, pp. 35-49.
2. *Op. Cit.*, pp. 40-43.
3. From "The Negro Church," *The Atlanta University Publications*, Arno Press and the New York Times. New York, 1968, p. 30.
4. See E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro Church in America*. New York, Schocken Books, 1964, p. 16.
5. *Richard Allen, Apostle of Freedom*, by Charles H. Wesley, Washington, D.C., Associated Publishers, 1935, p. 52.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 80.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 81-82.
9. H. Shelton Smith, *In His Image, But. . .* Durham, Duke University Press, 1972, p. 54.
10. Wesley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 72.
11. *Ibid.*, pp. 71-72.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 49. White membership was 45,949; black membership was 11,682.
13. James P. Brawley, *Two Centuries of Methodist Concern*, New York, Vantage Press, 1974, p. 36.
14. See, *Myth of the Negro Past*. New York, 1924.
15. See E. Franklin Frazier, *The Negro in the United States*. New York, 1957.
16. See Carter G. Woodson and Charles H. Wesley, *The Negro in our History*. Washington, D.C., Associated Publishers, 1922, pp. 102-103.
17. See H. Shelton Smith, *Op. Cit.*, p. 5, ff.

18. Quoted in Lorenzo Johnston Greene, *The Negro in Colonial New England*. New York, 1968, p. 259.
19. *Ibid.*, p. 260.
20. See, for example, Cotton Mather's extraordinary apologetic, *The Negro Christianized*, in which he is able to show to his satisfaction that "there is a reasonable soul in all of them," p. 23.
21. Greene, *Op. Cit.*, p. 258.
22. Smith, *Op. Cit.*, p. 11.
23. *Ibid.*
24. Winthrop Jordan, *White Over Black*. Chapel Hill, 1968, p. 179.
25. Smith, *Op. Cit.*, p. 7.
26. See Smith, *Ibid.*, p. 9, ff. for a discussion of the legal and spiritual reassurances given the slaveholders. See also, Jordan, *Op. Cit.*, p. 180, ff.
27. Greene, *Op. Cit.*, p. 288.
28. Smith, *Op. Cit.*, p. 53. See also Woodson and Wesley, *Op. Cit.* for a discussion of the failure of the Catholics, Episcopalians, Quakers, Presbyterians, etc. to attract Black converts.
29. Woodson and Wesley, *Op. Cit.*, p. 154.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 155.
31. Greene, *Op. Cit.*, p. 276.
32. See Winthrop Jordan, *Op. Cit.* "The Question of Negro Capacity," pp. 187-190.
33. W. Seward Salisbury, *Religion in American Culture*. Homewood, Illinois, The Dorsey Press, 1964, p. 463.
34. *Ibid.*
35. Arnold Toynbee. *A Study of History*, 2nd ed., London, Oxford University Press, 1935, I, p. 224.