From the Nation of Islam to Hip-Hop: The Influence of Islam on Black Nationalism

Mrđen, Iva

Odsjek za anglistiku

Filozofski Fakultet

Sveučilište u Zagrebu

DIPLOMSKI RAD

From the Nation of Islam to Hip-Hop: The Influence of Islam on Black Nationalism

(Američka književnost i kultura)

Studentica: Iva Mrđen

Mentorica: Jelena Šesnić

Zagreb, 23. rujna 2024.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

Izjavljujem i svojim potpisom potvrđujem da je ovaj rad rezultat mog vlastitog rada koji se temelji na istraživanjima te objavljenoj i citiranoj literaturi. Izjavljujem da nijedan dio rada nije napisan na nedozvoljen način, odnosno da nije prepisan iz necitiranog rada, te da nijedan dio rada ne krši bilo čija autorska prava. Također izjavljujem da nijedan dio rada nije korišten za bilo koji drugi rad u bilo kojoj drugoj visokoškolskoj, znanstvenoj ili obrazovnoj ustanovi.

Zagreb, 23.09.2024. 

(mjesto i datum) (potpis)

Table of Contents

1. INTRODUCTION

When discussing Black Nationalism, Alphonso Pinkney stresses that the movement would not even exist if it were not for certain reasons that led to its creation. According to the author,

> It is quite conceivable that if the Africans who were brought to America had initially been responded to simply as people, nationalist sentiment would not have developed among them. But given the circumstances of their importation to America, it is unlikely that their encounters with whites could have resulted in anything other than friction. It is even possible that at the end of the Civil War, if the society had moved forthrightly to make amends for past injustices, the nationalist movement might not have persisted. But given the nature of black-white relations in the United States, accommodation and assimilation were destined to be overshadowed by conflict and competition. (8)

In other words, Black Nationalism was created by nothing but American history, or rather by the treatment African-Americans received throughout it. Today, when more and more Blacks are pointing to the unjust treatment enforced by their government and American society in general, it is necessary to turn to the past to see the ways in which the community came together before and to predict the ways in which that might happen once again. According to both Michael C. Dawson and Pinkney, religion was one of the tools used by the Blacks in their fight against white supremacy and racial segregation. However, it was not the only tool, but it certainly was one of the most widespread ones. A possible reason for this could be found in the characteristics of religion itself. When Catherine L. Albanese talks about religion, she states that it "is a feature that encompasses all of human life, and therefore it is difficult if not impossible to define it" (3). However, the author also mentions many of its functions, some of which had a significant part in the creation of today's society.

It is exactly this premise of religion as an all-encompassing entity that influenced the creation of the idea for this thesis paper. As stated in the title, this paper will be dealing with Islam; it will try to portray the influence it had on the awakening of Black Nationalism, "the second oldest (after radical egalitarianism) ideological tendency found within black political thought" (Dawson, p. 21). When defining Black Nationalism, Dawson states that its "core

concepts include support for African-American autonomy and various degrees of cultural, social, economic, and political separation from white America" (21). The main reasons for these separatist tendencies will be discussed in the following chapters. However, as the author asserts, based on all the evidence presented in works by various authors and from the examples in real life, it is not difficult to assume that "race is seen as *the* fundamental category for analyzing society, and America is seen as fundamentally racist" (21), which is precisely why the movement came into existence in the first place.

In the first part of the paper, the concept of religion, as well as its connection to both personal and group identity, will be discussed in detail. Afterward, readers will be given a short historical background, the main focus of which will be placed on the religious history of the United States of America and the spiritual history of the African American people. Some of the various notions to be discussed in these chapters include the importance of religion in the formation of the United States of America, the indigenous religions brought to the American continent by the slaves that influenced the other religions they came in contact with, forceful Christianization that ultimately served as a fuel for Black Nationalism, etc. Finally, the subject of African American Muslims will be touched upon in great detail – there will be a discussion of their conversion (why they chose to change their religious identity), of the group known as the Nation of Islam (what was their purpose during the Civil Rights movement, the characteristics of the Islam they followed, their leaders, the opinions of other Muslim communities towards them, etc.). Lastly, the contemporary situation among the African American Muslim community will be mentioned (how they stay in contact both with their Muslim, as well as with their Black identity).

2. RELIGION AND IDENTITY

When talking about religion, Albanese in her book states that religion is a term that is hard, if not impossible, to define. However, the author also says that religion "can be understood as a system of symbols (creed, code, cultus) by means of which people (a community) orient themselves in the world with reference to both ordinary and extraordinary powers, meaning, and values" (11). When talking about the creation of religion, the author states,

> What we know about various religions suggests that they arose in the context of dealing with boundaries. For many peoples, physical boundaries that marked the limits of the territory of another group were highly charged with emotional significance. They divided land that was safe, the source of nurture and sustenance, from land that was alien and unfriendly, the home of hostile spirits and strange or warring peoples. So it was that any exchanges conducted across these boundaries were stressful occasions and that people strengthened themselves for these exchanges through the use of ritual. In the formula of word and act, people at a dangerous place in the physical landscape could call on special help; they could ease their encounter with whatever was alien to themselves.
>
> This assistance seemed to come from the unknown, from forces that transcended, or went beyond, ordinary life. In other words, alien land and people were countered by a second form of 'otherness', more powerful than the first. By enlisting the help of this second otherness, the first was overcome, and life could go on as intended. These 'other' forces that saved a difficult situation by their power were called religious. And the rituals through which they were contacted were religious rituals. (4)

In other words, the first people "invented" religion as a way of coping with the unknown. Even though a religious being meant to serve as a protector was equally unknown, it was perceived as something good, as something that was bringing comfort in a dark and unknown world. In contrast, the unknown in the physical world often represented danger and was seen in a negative light. The main reason for this negative perception must have been connected with the environment itself, considering that physical dangers often hid in at the time undiscovered territories filled with various beasts and rival tribes. However, for the first people, this was not the only purpose of religion. Very soon, religion started to serve another, more important purpose. Instead of just being seen as a way to protect oneself from evil and

unknown forces, the first people also started to perceive it as a way to connect with one's community, as well as with one's identity. As Albanese continues,

> Our religion concerns the way we locate ourselves in space through the arrangement of sacred rites and holy places as boundary markers. It concerns, too, the way we locate ourselves in time through origin stories or theological traditions that also express boundaries. But location is always social. It concerns our place among other human beings, and it means staking out a claim on the landscape of identity. (5)

In other words, these religious stories, rituals, and beliefs connect people with other members of their community, both alive and dead, through mutual sharing of the aforementioned stories, rituals, and beliefs. As Albanese later claims, "Until now, history has shown that some form of religion provides the most powerful and effective source of unity for a nation. Religion, in fact, supplies the ideologies and prescriptive norms that form a kind of cultural 'cement' for a society" (395).

A similar opinion is shared by Slavica Jakelić who in her book, while talking about religion, states that "religions are, of course, about theology and soteriology, but they are also profoundly about cultures, institutions, and identities. Religions have been and still are some of the most powerful sources of collective identification – of organizing an individual's loyalties into one group" (42). To further support her claim on the importance of religion in the process of identity creation, Jakelić cites Ernest Gellner, a philosopher. When talking about religion and national identity, Gellner states that religion plays an important part in national identity creation, however, as the author continues, "nationalists value religion 'as an aid to the community, and not so much in itself'" (20), which is exactly why many academics believe that they should be studied separately. However, as both Jakelić and Gellner state, there is an exception to this rule. While most religions studied in the context of nationalism oftentimes become insignificant, or rather ignored, the same cannot be said for Islam. As Jakelić states,

> For Gellner, we saw, whenever religion is placed next to nationalism, it necessarily loses: it loses its (structural) importance or 'that' which makes it religion (beliefs). The only exception is Islam. The authority and vitality of Islam in modern(ized) societies, Gellner argues, stem from an insistence on faith as an expression of high culture and the modernizers' appeal to the universal theological substance and vocabulary of Islam. (28 – 29)

In other words, followers of Islam often give their religion the same importance that they give to their national identity. The main reason behind this practice could probably be found in the religion itself. As it is universally known, Islam is widely spread on the Asian continent, in the countries of the Arabian peninsula, as well as in some parts of Africa, and as of late, in some parts of North America (brought to the United States of America by Arab and Asian immigrants and African slaves – this will be discussed in later chapters). Due to the worship of the same religion (if we take into consideration that almost ninety percent of the world's Muslims practice Sunni Islam), many of the nations in which Islam is considered a national religion usually practice the same rituals, follow the same rules of conduct, and speak the same language, at least in religious purposes, which ultimately brings them closer, despite some national differences. Another factor that plays a significant role in this process of equalization of Islam and a collective identity is the religion itself. According to Islam, all Muslims should see one another as brethren or as one nation, no matter the differences in skin color, nationality, or something else. In other words, religion (Islam) trumps everything else, including the national identity, or rather, it is pan-national.

Additionally, when talking about religion and politics, Jakelić claims that religions and religious institutions can sometimes, if not always, have a significant role in the social and political life of a certain community. As the author states, "As an element of collective identity, moreover, religion and religious institutions may continue to be the *spiritus movens* of social life – the basis for constructively as well as for disruptively shaping public life, for resolving as well as for legitimizing violent social conflicts" (45) If we were to guess the main reason behind all of these attributes of religion (the power it has in inciting social and political changes), we could probably say that it is all thanks to the fact that politics and religion are, in a way, interconnected. Even though many anthropologists and political studies specialists claim that these two notions should not be studied together, it is of utmost importance to note that religion often played, and still plays, an important part in politics itself. For example, Jakelić, in her work, mentions the process of "religious othering" and the significant role it played in the establishment, or the division, of certain countries. As the author states, "in Ireland, Croatia, or Serbia, it is the ascriptive meaning of religion perpetuated through narratives about difference from, conflict with, and resistance to the oppression of some specific Other, not only the theologies of nationhood, that helps us to understand how communities that belong to the same religious tradition have come to view each other as Other" (30 – 31).

In other words, religious differences play an important part in creating conflict both within and outside certain communities. Those conflicts, more often than not, ultimately turn into something much greater, such as wars, divisions of states, etc. Even though all of the previously mentioned countries participating in this division share the same religious tradition, the same can also be applied to nations that follow two opposed religions that are in no way connected. If we were to look at it from a logical point of view, we could even say that two completely different religions in the same territory could create far greater conflicts. Because, unlike the religions that share the same religious traditions, these communities would have nothing in common. Or, in other words, there would be nothing for them to connect over (all of their religious rituals, stories, histories, etc. would be too different for them to find common ground).

Another author who writes about the interconnectedness between religion and politics is Audrey E. Kitagawa, who, in her work, focuses more on the unpleasant sides of this interconnectedness. While writing about globalization and the exploitation of Africa, the author stresses that globalization can often use religious and national identity to bring conflict and disrupt peace among previously peaceful nations. As the author states,

> Economic globalization has brought benefits and disadvantages. It has enlivened societies to work at retaining their unique cultural, religious, and ethnic identities as markets increasingly bring uniformity and sameness everywhere. It has simultaneously sharpened cultural, religious, and ethnic differences as groups compete for resources, accessibility to goods, services, jobs, and a host of other necessities. It has also polarized groups toward heightened conflict and violence as they become increasingly politicized and manipulated by complex internal and external forces that seek greater consolidation of power and wealth into fewer hands. (68)

In other words, as much as globalization helps people become aware of their political and national differences, it also exploits those differences for its own gain. So, while religion (but also ethnicity, nationality, etc.) serves as a tool to connect people within one nation – it provides them with stories, legends, rituals, etc. they can use to connect with the people inside of their community (dead and alive), and with themselves (they can find their purpose and their place within the community); it can also serve as a tool that divides them. For example, in today's world, there are many instances of wars and intranational conflicts started only on the basis of religious differences, however it is also necessary to say that even though religion

was used as a reason for the conflict, sometimes the real reasons were much deeper than that. Wars/conflicts were mostly started because of territory or some valuable resources present on it but religious differences were used as a spark that ignited the entire ordeal. Some of the countries where a similar thing occurred include Northern Ireland (conflict between Catholics and Protestants), Nagorno-Karabakh region where Armenian Christians and Azerbaijan Muslims have been fighting for over a decade (the conflict started when the Christian population of the region decided to split from Azerbaijan and become part of Armenia due to religious differences present between the two peoples), etc.

3. RELIGION AND THE FORMATION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

As stated in the previous chapter, religion oftentimes played an important role in politics precisely because of the role it played in the society itself. It is for this reason that it is possible to say that the main role of religion was, and still is, the unification of people. The same idea is also shared by Michael Novak who, when talking about religion in America, mentions John Locke and his enormously influential ideas. As Novak says, "Locke places considerable hope in civil society, but the American founders believed that even a good social contract and a well-intentioned civil society will in time disintegrate, unless fortified by virtue, itself reinforced by religion" (170). In other words, both Novak and Locke believe that one of the most important characteristics a citizen of a certain country (in this case America) should have is a virtue that can only be taught through religion, because it is only through a religion that a person can learn to distinguish right from wrong. According to them, it is this virtue taught through religion that turns us into emphatic, law-abiding citizens.

This notion of religion functioning as a fuel for the creation of morally correct citizens can also be found in case of the United States. Even though the US is considered to be a secular country because of its religious pluralism (it would be unfair to promote only one religion), it is important to note that religion always played, and to some extent still plays, an important role in its functioning. As Novak in his work claims, "American religion had a *worldly* character. And right from the start the American *world* had a religious character" (161). To prove the importance of religion in American political life, the author further adds, "For the Americans, religion – the Christian Bible, the Protestant churches – were sources of the revolution, and the cause of liberty was passionately embraced by the churches. In

America, the fires of revolution were lit by the Puritan preachers of New England and their counterparts throughout the thirteen colonies" (162). As the author later adds, "In America, religion favored the cause of liberty, and political statesmen favored religion. No other institution in America was so responsible for inspiring and motivating the American War of Independence as the Protestant churches – and the few thousand Catholics of the land along with them." (164). Another author who writes about the importance of religion in the establishment of the US is Mark A. Noll. When talking about the early period of the Republic, the author mentions politicians such as John Witherspoon of New Jersey and Patrick Henry of Virginia. As the author claims, both of these politicians "were advocates of religious establishments who thought that state support of the churches was essential for their health and the health of society" (146). In other words, these politicians saw religions and religious institutions as the pillars of the society whose sole purpose was creating and educating a healthy society (a society whose members respect one another and abide by the law). Besides Noll, there is also John Witte, Jr., who primarily writes about the establishment of the American Constitution. Just like the previously mentioned authors, Witt too says that Protestantism played an important role in the first years of the Republic. To prove his claim, the author quotes a draft of the Constitution itself. As the author states,

> Two other articles confirmed the traditional privileges and protections of Protestants: Article XXIX stated: 'No person unless of the Protestant religion shall be Governor, Lieutenant Governor, a member of the Senate or of the House of Representatives, or hold any judiciary employment within this State.' Article XXXIV provided: 'The free exercise and enjoyment of religious profession and worship shall forever be allowed to every denomination of Protestants within the State.' For the rest, the document was silent on religious and civil rights. (5)

As presented in the quote above, it is possible to see that religion not only played an important role in the establishment of the State, or in the creation of morally correct citizens. It too had a very constricting role – only those who followed a certain religion (Protestantism) had the power in law creation, as well as in making sure that the same laws were practiced. These laws, or rather the practice of them, are further analyzed in a work written by Jon Butler. As Butler states,

> In colonies with church establishments, the law may have tolerated religious activity by dissenters, but it did not always do so, and it sometimes made the activity difficult.

> In colonies without establishments, the law customarily penalized a wide variety of settlers who may not have upheld Protestant Christianity in at least some perfunctory fashion. It openly discriminated against Catholics and Jews, denying them the right to own property or to vote, sometimes both, in different colonies. The law penalized blasphemers who spoke ill of Protestant Christianity. (190)

In other words, Protestantism not only played an important role in the first years of the Republic but it was also considered to be the superior religion, supposed to be followed by everyone. While Protestants enjoyed all of the rights, the majority of those who did not participate in the religion were left on the outsides, with their basic freedoms limited – they were not allowed to own property or to vote. As Butler further continues, "Throughout the pre-Revolutionary period, Pennsylvania forced officeholders to swear to their belief in the divinity of Jesus, banned blasphemy, forbade Sunday labor, and urged all settlers to attend Christian services on the Sabbath so 'looseness, irreligion, and Atheism may not creep in under the pretense of conscience'" (190). From this quote it is possible to see that religion played more than just a spiritual role within the American society. As the author claims, it also entered into the American political life, so much so that it imposed on people's freedoms – they were forced to attend services, rest on Sundays, etc.

Moreover, according to Noll, religion was so significant that it played an important part in the incitement of the Civil War. In his work, the author quotes Richard Carwardine, who states, "When during the climax of the campaigns of 1856 and 1860 ministers officiated with equal enthusiasm at revival meetings and at Republican rallies, it was clear that religion and politics had fused more completely than ever before in the American republic" (155). As Noll further expands on Carwardine's quote, "In other words, evangelical religion provided much of the impetus that led to the Civil War." (Noll, p. 155) Namely, religion (especially Protestantism) that spread the message of freedom, proved to be an inspiring force for many of the politicians of the early period of the American Republic. So much so that it opened the way to a four-year conflict that ended in numerous deaths and ultimately resulted in liberty for all, at least on paper.

However, despite the clear importance of religion in both the political and social life of America, it is important to note that many authors also claim differently. According to some of them, religion did not play such a significant role as some might think. One of the authors who emphasizes that religion is just religion and not a catalyst for social or political change is

the previously mentioned Witt. After quoting a draft of the Constitution that can be found towards the beginning of this chapter, the author continues his work by saying that the draft was very soon rejected by a number of politicians, mainly for constricting the religious rights of the people. Therefore, it is also possible to say that, despite its dominant presence in the first years of the Republic, religion, more importantly, Christian religion (Protestantism) did not actually play such a significant role in the creation of America or in its social life. On the contrary, at the time, there were many politicians who were fighting against the privileged status of certain religions and for religious liberties. One of those people was a well-known American politician and one of the Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson. As Witt states in his work,

> Both Jefferson and Adams were self-consciously engaged in a new experiment in religious liberty. Both started with the credo of the American Declaration of Independence, which they drafted – that 'all men are created equal' and that they have 'certain unalienable rights'. Both insisted upon bringing within the mantle of constitutional protection every recognized religion of the day – Christian and Jew, Muslim and Hindu, infidel and pagan alike. Both advocated guarantees of 'essential rights and liberties of religion' for all. (2)

In other words, Jefferson, like many of his peers, believed that all Americans should have the ability to choose the religion they were going to follow. At the same time, it was expected of the state to let religious institutions be – they were not supposed to help them in any way (make one religion more important than the others, provide any financial help, etc.), they were not supposed to impose on their decision-making process (all religious institutions should have been allowed to create their own sets of rules that they were going to follow and impose on other members of their community). Another author who claims that religion did not play such a significant role as some may claim is Noll, who in his paper writes,

> The most careful studies of religion in the founding era make strong claims for the presence of Protestant elements in the politics of the Revolutionary period, but none claims an overwhelmingly Protestant ethos, and none claims for the founding a specifically evangelical influence. The well-documented debates on the ratification of the Constitution were not entirely devoid of interest in religion, since those debates included concern for protecting religious liberty as later specified in the First Amendment. But the overwhelmingly this-worldly character of those debates reveals

> no preoccupation with explicitly Christian, much less explicitly evangelical, concerns. (147)

In other words, even though religion (Protestantism) was largely present in the first years of the Republic, we cannot say that it was politically or socially significant as some authors imply. Even though religion was being actively discussed, both in personal and political life, it was mostly for the purpose of giving people their religious freedom. Therefore, those texts/articles should not be seen as a way of promoting a certain religion as such, but rather as a tool for promoting religious and other freedoms.

4. AFRICAN AMERICANS AND RELIGION

Now that we have established the importance of religion in national and collective identity creation, and briefly covered the history of religion in the United States, it is time to move on to African American history in the US. Throughout this chapter, readers will be presented with an insight into the first encounter of European settlers and Africans (later African Americans), the history of slavery, the religious history of African Americans, both the indigenous spirituality and the imposed one (Christianity) and the ways in which both managed to help form Black Nationalism.

Before moving on to the historical background, it is necessary to first define the concept of Black Nationalism itself. According to Dawson and Pinkney, Black Nationalism, which first started to appear during the slavery period, in the 1960s manifested itself in various forms of nationalist sentiment. As both authors claim, Black Nationalism started to develop and progress in four different categories that will now be discussed. The first one, at the same time the most widespread one, was cultural nationalism. According to Pinkney, "Cultural nationalism holds that black people throughout the world possess a distinct culture and that before black liberation can be achieved in the United States, blacks must reassert their cultural heritage, which is fundamentally different from that of the larger society" (13). The second category in which Black Nationalism comes to the surface is the educational one. According to the authors, educational nationalism is not that different from the cultural one because education is, after all, a component of culture. "However, educational nationalism tends to operate within the framework of educational institutions, both conventional and unorthodox"

(Pinkney, p. 13). As Pinkney states, "The proponents of educational nationalism see conventional American educations as destructive of Afro-Americans in that the schools miseducate the youth and thereby do not prepare them for liberation" (13 – 14). The third category in which Black Nationalism progressed is revolutionary nationalism, one of the most controversial types of Black Nationalism. According to Pinkney, "There are differences in the programs of groups that define themselves as revolutionary and nationalist, but most maintain that Afro-Americans cannot achieve liberation in the United States within the existing political and economic system. Therefore, they call for revolution to rid the society of capitalism, imperialism, racism, and sexism. Most base their ideological position on a combination of black nationalism and Marxism-Leninism and envision some form of socialism to replace capitalism" (14). The fourth and final subcategory of Black Nationalism, and the focus of this thesis paper, is religious nationalism which will be discussed in detail in the following chapters. [1]

4.1. FIRST ENCOUNTER AND SLAVERY

According to Anthony B. Pinn, the first encounter between Europeans and Africans took place way before the beginning of slavery, and, in the beginning, it did not have such devastating consequences. On the contrary, it was relatively civil. As Pinn states, "Contact between Europeans and Africans took place early and without vast, brutal, and dehumanizing consequences until the sixteenth century. New World exploration introduced the possibility of great wealth through access to a variety of resources that extended beyond the gold-mining operations under way in West Africa" (3). In other words, after the exploration of America, it soon became clear that the new continent was rich in goods that would need to be harvested through intense labor, which is where the idea of slavery was first born. According to the author, "the potential economic gain required a labor force and the slave labor market already in operation in the Caribbean and Brazil seemed the best alternative. With time, Africans were brought from a variety of locations – Angola, the Bight of Benin, the Gold Coast, and so on – to North America" (3). When talking about the reasons behind slavery, the author goes into more detail. As he states, one of the most important reasons, if not the most important one,

[1] For more information on Black Nationalism and the ways in which it was/is manifested see Dawson, pp. 104 – 135 and Pinkney, pp. 13 – 14 and pp. 98 – 205.

was the economic gain. However, as the author later claims, that was not the only reason. According to Pinn, "Other forms of labor were problematic and costly. Enslaved Africans were easily identifiable which made escape more difficult for them than would be the case with Indians and Europeans" (3). In other words, it was the color of their skin that made them an easy target. Because, according to Pinn, the color of their skin is the thing that made them easy to spot and it was also the characteristic that helped their captors keep a closer eye on them. Later, when talking about the official start of slavery, Pinn states, "the first enslaved Africans arrived in Virginia in 1619 and Manhattan in 1625. Enslaved Africans initially arrived in small numbers, but the importance of the African presence led to more shipments of human cargo" (3). Other authors also take the year 1619 as the year in which slavery officially began. One of these authors is Sydney H. Ahlstrom who, in his book, writes, "The year 1619 has fateful significance, for it marked the institution of representative government, the introduction of tobacco culture, and the beginning of black servitude in white America. Slavery soon became an accepted fact of life in Virginia, as it had long since been in New Spain, and as in a few decades it would become in the other colonies, including those of the North" (649). As the author later continues, "Slave labor was used to some extent in every colony. In 1775 the total slave population in the seven Northern colonies exceeded forty thousand" (649). Another author who tackles the issue of slavery is the previously mentioned Albanese who also takes 1619 as the year the slavery began. However, as the author states, it became legally regulated only later, considering that it took people longer to even acknowledge the existence of it. When Albanese writes about slavery, she goes into much more detail. Unlike Pinn and Ahlstrom, she is more critical of the situation and the author does not forget to mention the irony of the entire situation. As Albanese writes,

> Toward the end of August 1619, a Dutch ship slipped into harbor at Jamestown, Virginia. On board were at least twenty 'Negras', who were sold as indentured servants to the Virginia colony. So began the African presence in the land that became the United States – an ironic beginning in which, in the land of volunteers, the interrupted lives of nonvolunteers were redirected into channels of oppression. Over the next several decades, there was a continual slow trickle of human cargo into Virginia to labor on the tobacco plantations. By 1649 there were about 300 slaves out of a population of 15,000. After 1660 statutes began to acknowledge slavery and set forth conditions of enslavement, and by the end of the seventeenth century, other Africans were pouring into Virginia and the neighboring Maryland colony. (193)

The outpouring of slaves was so great that, as time progressed, their number drastically went up, and at one point they almost equaled in number with the white settlers. As Pinn states, "Many scholars have argued that by the late eighteenth century, enslaved Africans represented roughly 50 percent of the total population of the British colonies in North America" (3). This great amount of slaves brought to America and the fact that slavery itself lasted for so long completely changed the image of America. The same observation is also made by Albanese, who in her book writes,

> By 1865 through natural increase there were about 4 million African-Americans in the United States alone. The importation of African slaves was outlawed in 1808 and, while there was some smuggling, declined thereafter. Still, at the beginning of the nineteenth century there were about 1 million blacks in the country, representing some 20 percent of the population. In short, one person in five was black, and African-Americans had become a significant group. (193)

4.2. SLAVES AND RELIGION

Africans, unlike Europeans, were mostly followers of polytheistic religions. At the time of their capture, the majority of them believed in ancestral spirits and West-African gods that they worshiped through the practice of ritual dances or other similar rituals. However, some of them were also familiar with monotheistic religions, though not with Christianity. As Ahlstrom states, "On exceedingly rare occasion a slave brought to America was a Moslem or showed signs of Islamic contacts; but almost never had the blacks encountered Christianity except through the Europeans who bought and sold them" (699). Another author who mentions that some slaves brought to America followed Islam is Albanese, who, in her book, writes, "By and large, these Africans who came as slaves to America had originated from peoples in West Africa and the Congo–Angola region. They included Mandinke, Yoruba, Ibo, Bakongo, Ewe, Fon, and other nations, some of them followers of Islam and many of them practitioners of traditional African religions." (194). Even though it may seem unbelievable that, at the time, Islam was present in Africa considering how widespread traditional religions on the continent were, it is important to note that the Ottoman Empire started their conquest of the African continent at the beginning of the 16th century. The said conquest lasted for almost a century and resulted in the spread of Islam, which soon imposed itself as the dominant

religion in the annexed parts of the continent. Even though the Ottomans ultimately lost their power in Africa, their religious, as well as cultural, influence prevailed and is present even today[2].

Although the majority of the newly brought slaves already possessed some religion, or rather that the majority of them already had something they believed in, it is important to note that they were all forcefully stripped of the said religion, as well as of their languages, or anything else that would help them form some form of shared identity. As Albanese claims,

> During the period of middle passage between African ports and New World destinations, blacks were deliberately isolated from those who came from their community or spoke their language. Without the support of kin, friends, speech, or religion, an African would be unlikely to plot a revolt. He or she would be forced to become docile, depending for survival on what little the captors provided. (196)

The same opinion is also expressed by Charles Joyner who quotes from a contemporary author, "'There has always been a strong repugnance amongst the planters, against their slaves becoming members of any religious society,' Charles Ball wrote in 1837. 'They fear the slaves, by attending the meetings and listening to the preachers, may imbibe the morality they teach, the notions of equality and liberty, maintained in the gospel'" (183). In other words, Africans were not only forcefully taken from their homes and families, but they were also stripped of their basic human rights. Everything they had known and everything that had made them the people they were was taken from them only so they could be turned into perfect servants, afraid and unable to make a single move against their masters. Besides Albanese and Joyner, many other authors also point to this lack of spirituality among the first slaves. One of them is Albert J. Raboteau, who, unlike the previously mentioned authors, goes a bit further in his explanation of the lack of faith. According to Raboteau, there was more than just one reason for the lack of religion amongst the slaves. The first one is the already mentioned prevention of revolts[3] – if the people (Africans) had nothing in common, it would be impossible for them to come together, let alone revolt. The second reason had more to do with the masters themselves rather than with the slaves. As the author in his article states,

[2] For more information on the Ottoman presence in Africa and the spread of Islam see Laoust285 - 287.
[3] This fear of revolts incited by Christianity later proved justified when Christian slaves Nat Turner, Denmark Vesey and Gabriel Prosser (independent of one another) revolted against white masters and killed a lot of them. For more information on these revolts see Pinn, p. 5. Pinkney in his work also states that "Probably the earliest expressions of black nationalism manifested themselves in revolts against slavery" (13).

> From the beginning of the Atlantic slave trade, Europeans claimed that the conversion of slaves to Christianity justified the enslavement of Africans. Yet the conversion of slaves was not a high priority for colonial planters. British colonists in North America proved especially indifferent, if not downright hostile, to the conversion of their slaves. At first, opposition was based on the suspicion that English law forbade the enslavement of Christians and so would require slaveholders to emancipate any slave who received baptism. Masters suspected that slaves would therefore seek to be baptized in order to gain freedom. These fears were quickly allayed by colonial legislation declaring that baptism did not alter slave status. (75)

Another author who agrees with this claim and who also explains the lack of religion amongst slaves is the previously mentioned Pinn. As the author states,

> Differences in appearance, social habits, and cultural production were interpreted by the English in ways that painted Africans as barbaric and of less value than Europeans. Tied to this difference and degradation was a sense of Africans as heathens, in contrast to the Puritans and other colonists, who, to the extent that they were Christian (and English), possessed the 'truth'. It was only natural that religion would become contested ground in the North American colonies. Many Europeans settled in the colonies for religious reasons, and religious sensibilities often served as a justification for their less than honorable relations with Africans. (3 – 4)

In other words, as both Raboteau and Pinn state in their works, African slaves were not Christianized for fear that they would have to be set free, and that was not something the settlers could afford, considering that they were brought to America exactly because they provided free labor. For European colonizers, religion represented some tool that helped them distinguish civilized from barbaric people. It was this idea that they were civilized, and "others" barbaric that allowed them to commit various atrocities such as breaking up families, forcing people to hard labor, etc. The same is also stated by Ahlstrom, who claims, "The notion that Negroes were not included in God's scheme of redemption probably justified the inaction of some, but others no doubt found it easier to justify the enslavement of heathen than of fellow children of God" (699). Therefore, if they were to Christianize them, they would be forced to see them as people and would ultimately have to set them free. However, after the passing of the legislation that would allow slaves to still stay slaves, regardless of

their religious status, the slaveholders found another reason for not allowing Christianization, or rather for being against it. As Raboteau states,

> Christianity spoiled slaves. Christian slaves thought too highly of themselves, became impudent, and even turned rebellious. Moreover, Anglo-Americans were troubled by a deep-seated uneasiness at the prospect that slaves would claim Christian fellowship with white people. Africans were foreign; to convert them was to make them more like the English and therefore deserving of better treatment. In fact religion, like language and skin color, constituted the colonists' identity. To Christianize black-skinned Africans, therefore, would confuse the distinctiveness of the races and threaten the social order based upon that distinctiveness. (75 – 76)

As it was already stated and as it can be seen in the quotation above, white people, particularly the slaveholders, were not only worried about the loss of free labor, but they were also uneasy that they would have to be identified as equals with the blacks. And, as a result of that, they would have to completely change their treatment of them. As many of the previously mentioned authors stated, white people thrived on the fact that they were considered to be the superior race. It was exactly this fear of the loss of that power that made them do unimaginable things, one of which was stripping the African Americans of their religion, as well as forbidding them from turning towards a new religion (Christianity), albeit Christianity was one of the most important reasons they gave for slavery (according to them, it was their duty to show everyone the "truth", or rather to familiarize them with Jesus Christ).

4.3. AFRICAN AMERICANS AND CHRISTIANITY

Despite the protests of the slaveholders, the Christianization process of African Americans finally started in 1701 when the Church of England established the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts. According to Raboteau, the first task of the Society was to "convince masters that they had a duty to instruct their slaves in the truths of the gospel" (76). As the author continues, during these meetings between the slave owners and the Society,

> Officers of the Society stressed the compatibility of Christianity with slavery. Masters need not fear that religion would ruin their slaves. On the contrary, Christianity would

> make them better slaves by convincing them to obey their owners out of a sense of moral duty instead of out of fear. After all, Society pamphlets explained, Christianity does not upset the social order, but supports it. (76)

It was after these meetings that the slave owners finally agreed to the Christianization and, to an extent, even started to promote it. As Joyner states, "The Christianity disseminated by slaveholders, however, was very selective, emphasizing obedience in the here and now as much as salvation in the hereafter. The slaves were going to get religion whether their masters liked it or not, many masters reasoned, so making religion safe for slavery became a matter of high priority" (184). In other words, the Society managed to find a way in which religion, primarily Protestantism, would support the already existing system (slavery). Not only that, but it also found a way how to turn faith into a tool that would make the slaves more disciplined and eager to serve. Or, as Winthrop Jordan puts it; "These clergymen had been forced by the circumstance of racial slavery in America into propagating the Gospel by presenting it as an attractive device for slave control" (According to Raboteau, p. 76). However, both the clergymen and the slave owners failed to predict that the slaves would not be so open to the idea of Christianization. According to Raboteau, "During the first 120 years of black slavery in British North America, Christianity made little headway in the slave population" (77). When talking about the main reasons behind this rejection, the author states that the majority of African Americans were not too eager to part from their original beliefs, primarily because of the faith they had in their gods, but also because they possessed certain forms of prejudice towards the people preaching this new religion to them. As Raboteau writes, "Even if a missionary gained regular access to slaves, the slaves did not invariably accept the Christian gospel. Some rejected it, according to missionary accounts, because of 'the Fondness they have for their old Heathenish Rites, and the strong Prejudice they must have against Teachers from among those, whom they serve so unwillingly'" (76 – 77). Another author who enumerates the reasons for the rejection of Christianity among the Blacks is the previously mentioned Albanese. As the author claims, the slaves did not only reject Christianity because of their original faith or because of the prejudice towards people spreading this new faith, but also because it was abstruse. As the author writes, "Initially African-Americans were hardly excited about embracing Christianity. Instead, they quite clearly expressed indifference to the Anglican missionaries' literary model of religion. They disdained the emphasis on catechetical schools, the reading of the Bible and the Book of Common Prayer, and the mastery of Christian doctrine" (199). In other words, we could say

that this refusal of Christianity could in a way be seen as some form of a revolt against the whites, or rather that the Blacks were adamant in preserving of the notions that helped form a part of their identity, even if they were not allowed to.

However, as Raboteau claims, despite the protests of the majority, there were also some slaves who accepted the new religion. As Raboteau states,

> Others accepted Christianity because they hoped – colonial legislation and missionary pronouncements notwithstanding – that baptism would raise their status and ensure eventual freedom for their children, if not for themselves. One missionary in South Carolina required slaves seeking baptism to swear an oath that they did not request the sacrament out of a desire for freedom. (Apparently he missed the irony.) (77)

To state it differently, despite the legislations and the things the slaves were being told by both their masters and the missionaries who came to baptize them, many of them still saw Christianity as the way out of slavery, if not for themselves than at least for the generations coming after them. They believed that, in the future, Christianity would be the only way for them to be presented as equals and the only way they could possibly find freedom.

As stated earlier, despite the fact that the slaves were allowed to be Christianized from 1701, many of them decided against it. It was only in the 1740s, during the religious revival period ("the Great Awakening"), that the first large number of conversions of slaves took place. When talking about the reasons for this sudden change among the slaves, the previously mentioned authors give various reasons – the most important being the new forms of religion finding their way in the revival period. For example, Albanese in her work writes that the Blacks "found this new form of Christianity more attractive", because, as the author states, unlike Anglican missionaries, "Methodist and Baptist preachers (were) unburdened by the literary model of conversion" (199). In other words, preachers of this new form of Christianity did not insist on following a certain set of rules, rather they dived right into the religion itself. The same opinion is also expressed by Raboteau who, in his article, goes into more detail. According to him,

> Whereas the Anglicans had depended upon a slow process of indoctrination, the evangelicals preached the immediate experience of conversion as the primary requirement for baptism, thereby making Christianity more quickly accessible. Because of the centrality of the conversion experience in their piety, evangelicals also

> tended to de-emphasize instruction and downplay learning as prerequisites of Christian life. As a result, all classes of society were welcome to participate actively in prayer meetings and revival services, in which the poor, the illiterate, and even the enslaved prayed, exhorted, and preached. (77)

In other words, not only was this new form of Christianity more easily accessible, as both Albanese and Raboteau claim, but it was also more inclusive. Unlike the Anglican form of Christianity, this new form did not care for differences among its followers – all were allowed, or rather welcomed, to join the prayers and the worshiping, no matter if they were free or slave, if they knew how to read or not, etc. Moreover, Raboteau mentions another reason. As the author writes,

> More and more slaves converted to Christianity under the dramatic preaching of evangelical revivalists, especially Methodists and Baptists. The emotionalism of the revivals encouraged the outward expression of religious feeling, and the sight of black and white converts weeping, shouting, fainting, and moving in ecstatic trance became a familiar, if sensationalized, feature of the sacramental and camp meeting seasons. In this heated atmosphere slaves found a form of Christian worship that resembled the religious celebrations of their African heritage. The analogy between African and evangelical styles of worship enabled the slaves to reinterpret the new religion by reference to the old, and so made this brand of Christianity seem less foreign than that of the more liturgically sedate Church of England. (77)

Namely, it is possible to say that this new form of Christianity piqued the interest of the slaves particularly because of its similarity to their original beliefs. While the Anglican form of Christianity paid special attention to keeping everything according to the rules and relatively peaceful (masses consisted of praying, reading excerpts from the Bible, etc.), these new forms introduced a completely new kind of worship. Instead of just praying and reading and pondering about the Bible, Methodists, Baptists, and others introduced various songs and dances into their services. So much so, that it sometimes seemed like people were participating in some West-African ritual, rather than joining a regular Sunday mass.

The last reason the slaves had for joining this new form of Christianity was more political in nature. As Ahlstrom writes about the antebellum period, “In this hardening of attitudes the churches were a powerful factor. They provided the traditional recourse and appeal to the Absolute. They gave moral grandeur to the antislavery cause and divine

justification for slavery" (668). As can be understood from this quote, even though the churches were not actively participating in the demolition of slavery, they were, to an extent, showing their support, while at the same time stating that everything happens for a reason. However, there were also some churches that were conveniently sweeping the entire problem of slavery under the rug. One of those churches was the Presbyterians. According to Ahlstrom, "The official position adopted (by the Presbyterians) in 1849 was that slavery was a civil institution which should be dealt with by legislatures rather than churches" (660). As the author continues, "Countless individuals and groups attacked this official stand" (660). This ultimately resulted in the lack of black followers, considering that the church itself was doing nothing to free them from the bonds they were in. A similar thing happened with the Methodists. As Ahlstrom points out, "By 1843 there were 1,200 Methodist ministers and preachers owning about 1,500 slaves, and 25,000 members with about 208.000 more" (661). As the author continues, "The church's unity depended therefore on the strict enforcement of silence or neutrality on the slavery question, and for a half-century this proved to be possible" (661). Only in 1872 did the Methodists change their opinion and try to atone for their mistakes by officially aligning with the sentiments of the Northern Methodist church. The last church that showed indifference towards the problems of slaves was the Baptist church. As Ahlstrom writes, "During the 1830s it (the Baptist church) successfully avoided the slavery issue. In 1839-40 the Foreign Missions Board formally declared its neutrality, and in 1843 it was supported in this by the convention's vote" (663 – 664). In other words, according to Ahlstrom, all of these churches/religions, despite their initial attractiveness due to the similarities with the slaves' original religions, were to an extent avoided, particularly because of their stance on slavery. However, Raboteau disagrees with this claim and explains the entire matter a bit differently. As the author states,

> In the 1780s the evangelicals' implied challenge to the social order became explicit. Methodist conferences in 1780, in 1783, and again in 1784 strongly condemned slavery and tried 'to extirpate this abomination,' first from the ministry and then from the membership as a whole, by passing increasingly stringent regulations against slave-owning, slave-buying, and slave-selling. Several Baptist leaders freed their slaves, and in 1789 the General Committee of Virginia Baptists condemned slavery as 'a violent deprivation of the rights of nature.' (78)

In other words, Raboteau in his work claims that these churches were not as indifferent as Ahlstrom had stated in his book. On the contrary, the majority of them tried to play an active

part in the antislavery movement, but was stopped, either by their superiors or by the people they were surrounded with. Namely, they were pacified into inaction, or better, into 'neutrality', for fear that they too would suffer similar consequences. Despite their latter retraction, their initial response to the antislavery movement is what got the slaves interested in them. In fact, it got them so interested in this new form of Christianity that they ultimately converted to it. As Raboteau further states, "Though both Methodists and Baptists rapidly retreated from antislavery pronouncements, their struggle with the established order and their uneasiness about slavery gave slaves, at least initially, the impression that they were 'friendly toward freedom'" (78). As he later continues,

> Methodists and Baptists backed away from these implications in the 1790s, but they had already taken a momentous step, and it proved irreversible. The spread of Baptist and Methodist evangelicalism between 1770 and 1820 changed the religious complexion of the South by bringing unprecedented numbers of slaves into membership in the church and by introducing even larger numbers to at least the rudiments of Christianity. (79)

Videlicet, this initial response to slavery of both Methodist and Baptist churches made slaves believe that they had allies among the whites, or rather among the Christian community. Despite the churches' later change of stance towards the issue of slavery, the slaves still continued to believe in the good-heartedness of the Christians and ultimately converted to this new form of Christianity, which in the end resulted in a completely different demographic in the South. Once, the Christian South was filled with non-believing African Americans; suddenly it turned into a predominantly Christian territory. However, this initial stance of the churches did not only influence the demographic of the South, but it also drastically changed both the culture of the African Americans and their religious beliefs, which would be predominantly Christian from that moment, all the way till today.

4.3.1. INVISIBLE INSTITUTION

According to Pinkney, "Religion has always played an important role in the black community, as it is one of the most cohesive and well-organized institutions. During the ante-bellum period, when blacks were allowed to worship at all, they frequently did so at white Christian churches, most often occupying a segregated section of the church. In 1786, responding to the

practice of segregation in white churches, a former slave, Richard Allen, and his fellow black worshippers founded the African Methodist Episcopal Church in Philadelphia. This signaled the beginning of autonomous black Christian churches in the United States" (17). However, as it will be presented in this chapter, way before 1786, blacks managed to find a way to meet in secret, far away from the prying eyes of their white masters. When talking about religion, most importantly Christianity, and the role it played in the life of Black Americans Raboteau states that even though the majority of them initially refused Christianization (for reasons mentioned in the previous chapter), they all, very soon, found solace in it: "As the transplanted Africans reflected upon the evil that had befallen them and their parents, they increasingly turned to the language, symbols, and worldview of the Christian holy book. There they found a theology of history that helped them to make sense of their enslavement" (75). In other words, African American slaves found comfort in Christianity because it was in the Good Book that they came upon characters that resembled them in so many ways (specifically in Exodus). Just like them, the people presented in the Bible were enslaved, forced to work in the most unimaginable conditions, etc. However, despite all of the plights that befell the people of God, they still managed to come out of the entire ordeal triumphant. This notion of faith as something that saves people from troubles is exactly what gave African American slaves hope that their fate, too, would one day change.

Now that we have established the importance of religion in the lives of African American slaves (why they connected to it, what it presented in their lives, etc.), it is important to say something about the characteristics of the said religion. Although African American slaves accepted Christianity, it is important to note that the faith they followed was not Christianity per se. As both Raboteau and Albanese claim in their works, even though the faith that the slaves followed resembled Christianity, it also consisted of many non-Christian elements. Namely, it was Christianity embedded with indigenous African religions. As Raboteau puts it, "But the slaves did not simply become Christians; they fashioned Christianity to fit their own peculiar experience of enslavement in America" (81). Or rather, their religion (Christianity)

> was built on pieces of a common African past, reconstructed to provide strength and solace in the new situation. It was built, too, on the experiences that the slaves endured in America, mixing their sense of involuntary presence into their religion. And finally, it was built with materials that came to the slaves from the religion of their masters. African-American religion was constructed in part from the Judeo-Christian tradition.

> Together, these three sources – the West African background, the condition of slavery in the present, the language of European Christianity – provided the elements for a religion to fit the conditions of a distinct people in a new land. (Albanese, pp. 196 – 197)

It is also important to note that Raboteau, in his article, does not only talk about the specific character of Black Christianity. On the contrary, he also stresses the differences between white and Black Christianity, and, at one point, he even goes so far as to say that the slaves believed that their Christianity was the only right form of the religion, because, unlike their white peers, the Blacks could actually understand the word of God, considering they had the experience to account for. As Raboteau writes, "Inevitably the slaves' Christianity contradicted that of their masters. For the slaves knew that no matter how sincerely religious the slaveowners might be, their Christianity was compatible with slavery, and the slaves' was not. The division went deep; it extended to the fundamental interpretation of the Bible" (80).

Considering the differences between the official (white) and Black Christianity have been established, it would only seem fit to say something about the worship itself. As it was stated in the previous chapter, the slave owners feared that the slaves would become bold and rebellious after being Christianized. In order to prevent the dissemination of rebellious ideas, white people (slave owners), at one point, forbade them from meeting without a white man's supervision. As Ahlstrom writes in his book, "In virtually all of the slave states, however, there were laws to restrict the slave's freedom of assembly, so that the usual practice was to compose local churches of both white and black members, allotting special seating to the blacks, who often outnumbered white members." (702). In other words, African American slaves were only to practice their faith under the supervision of a white priest/minister, both to make sure that they were doing it properly and also to make sure that the faith was not being used for something sinister, such as the organization of a rebellion. That is why, in the beginning, the worship of African American slaves was not so different from that of the white members of their community. However, as Ahlstrom states, the situation with faith changed over time. In the continuation of this chapter, Ahlstrom presents his readers with the exact reasons that led to this paranoid state among the slave owners and whites in general and talks about the influence it had on the slaves. As the author writes,

> If the rise of abolitionism had a positive influence on Negro evangelism, Nat Turner's slave insurrection in Virginia in 1831 had the opposite effect. Turner was a Baptist

> exhorter with strong visionary tendencies, and since there had also been significant religious overtones in Gabriel Prosser's plot of 1800 and Denmark Vesey's attempt in 1822, fear of further rebellions led to increased resistance to the preaching activity of free Negroes, the separate assembly of black congregations, and the spread of literacy among the slaves. Given the combination of these factors – the sheer vastness of the task, the prohibitions on public assembly, and restrictions on the extension of literacy among the slaves – only the most incomplete kind of Christianization could be carried out. (702 – 703)

In other words, just like the slaves themselves, the slave owners were equally to blame for the creation of this different form of Christianity (Black Christianity). From the quote presented above, but also from the opinions of various authors presented in the chapter before, it is clear that the slave owners tried to do everything in their power to prevent the slaves from becoming educated, because education, as the masters had figured out, meant power. Rather, it presented a way to freedom. However, education was also supposed to give the slaves the ability to read and to understand what they had read from the Bible and the catechism, which, at the same time, meant that they would be able to understand and properly perform the faith they had adopted.

Once they grew tired of the constant control of the masters, the slaves began to secretly meet in the dead of night and perform rituals that suited them. Considering there was no one there to show them the ropes and the fact that they had been forbidden from learning how to read and write, the rituals they performed lacked Christian elements. For example, when talking about these rituals, and the Black Church in general, Albanese writes, "Thriving in the midst of the white-dominated Christianity of the masters, black Christianity has often been called the 'invisible institution' – a church or churches without membership rolls and ordained pastors, without official meeting places and approved ceremonies" (199 – 200). When describing the rituals, Albanese points to the indigenous nature of them, which might have played a part in the awakening of Black Nationalism. Because, even though the slaves left their original languages and tribes in the past, religion seemed to be the one thing they could not forget. What supports this claim even more is the fact that these indigenous elements also found their way into Black Christianity, despite the fact that the slaves were forced to forget their original religion(s). For example, while describing these rituals, the author claims that they usually took place in the cabin of one of the slaves, or in the woods. As the author continues, they often consisted of shouting in religious excitement or singing.

According to the author, one of the most sung songs were the spirituals, songs which very much pointed to the African elements. In her book, Albanese defines spirituals as songs "with words and thematic content based on the Bible" (201), whose melodies "had developed over the years, probably through a blending of West African and Protestant musical forms" (201). As for the performance of the spirituals, Albanese writes that they "were accompanied by hand clapping and head tossing, by cries and moans, and by a form of sacred dancing called the ring shout. In this ritual, largely brought by the slaves from West Africa, a leader lined out the verses of the song while a group of others, called shouters, moved around in a circle" (201).

All of these characteristics of the religion, together with some other things, point to the fact that these 'invisible institutions', indeed, had more than just a religious purpose. According to Albanese, they were very political in character:

> The invisible institution became the religion of a double blackness, carried on in the shadows and under cover of the night, always in danger of interruption and punishment so severe that it might mean the death of a slave. Yet the invisible institution made the slaves, more intensely, a community: it brought blacks together as a people, a nation without the nation. Like so many others who were pouring into America from abroad during these years, blacks came to understand themselves as one among the many. (200)

Namely, this new religion played an important part in the awakening of Black Nationalism. For the first time in years, possibly even centuries, Black people began to see one another as peers. Despite the fact that the majority of them originally came from different tribes, or that they originally spoke different languages/dialects, once again they managed to find something that would unite them. As Albanese states, they were "a nation without the nation" (200), namely, people who no longer belonged anywhere finally managed to find their community. What now bound them together was not a continent or a language they had in common, but various rituals they performed together far away from the prying eyes of their masters.

Based on this uniting power of religion (Christianity), it should come as no surprise that Black Christianity also played a significant role in politics. According to Ahlstrom, "revivalistic Protestant Christianity became the chief means by which the African slave – bereft of his native culture, language, and religion – defined and explained his personal and social existence in America" (704). Albanese in her book goes even further and writes this

about the Black church: “If blacks were a nation, then their church was a *polis*, an independent city in which they governed themselves and planned their interactions with other peoples. It was no surprise, therefore, that in the twentieth century, the leadership for the black civil rights movement came largely from the church” (205).

4.3.2. BLACK CHRISTIANITY AND THE CIVIL RIGHTS MOVEMENT

According to Sandy Dwayne Martin, “In the course of American history Christianity has been central to the private and public lives of the great majority of blacks. It has provided or undergirded a search for ultimate or sacred meaning, a respect for racial history and culture, and an avenue and rationale in the quest for racial freedom, equality, and empowerment in an often hostile environment” (10). As the author further states,

> The faith of African American Christians has throughout American history motivated their quest for racial freedom and justice. Much of the impetus for the founding of independent congregations, denominations, associations, and conventions in the 1700s and 1800s was, along with the search for freer and more Christian treatment in religious circles, the struggle against slavery and poverty. (10)

In other words, African American religion, rather Black Christianity, played a significant role in the public and private lives of the blacks precisely because of its own position in Christianity itself. As was stated in the previous chapter, Black Church arose from the foundations of white Christianity. Even though the slaves adopted Christianity from white people - both the scriptures and the rituals - they believed that they understood the religion way better than white people ever could, because, unlike the whites, the African American slaves actually experienced the events that had been described in the Bible. It is for this reason that the Black Church ultimately departed from the official Christian church and became a separate entity whose sole purpose was the upliftment of the blacks. Together with the departure of the Black Church from the official Christianity, blacks too started their own fight for freedom and equality. As stated in the chapter before, it was only after the establishment of Black Christianity that the slaves began to revolt against their white masters and ultimately earned their freedom. The same opinion is also expressed by Ahlstrom who, in his book, states, “So the southern churches, like American society from the beginning, made discrimination and segregation the basic pattern. Yet one thing was new: the black churches

replaced the invisible institution of slavery days and became a major means of preserving and giving voice to America's largest under-class" (635).

Even after the end of slavery, churches (Black Churches) continued to carry the same significance in the lives of black citizens of America. According to Ahlstrom, "From the days of emancipation until the mid-twentieth century, the church was by far the most important black institution after the family" (710). To prove his claim, the author provides his readers with examples of the things churches did for their black patrons. As he writes, "The church has consistently been the chief agency of social control, though in urban contexts its hold was gradually weakened. The churches also gave the first impetus to economic cooperation among Negroes, published the most influential periodicals, and aided Negro education as actively as any other institution" (710). Namely, churches took care of more than just their patrons' spiritual needs. They played an important part in their communities. Not only did they make sure that their members were informed of the events and actions taking place in the world around them, but they also helped raise well-educated younger members of the community, who would ultimately grow up to have a more prosperous future than their ancestors. At one point, Ahlstrom goes so far in his praise of the Black Church that he even says that "The church was in a sense a surrogate for nationality, answering to diverse social needs and providing an arena for the exercise of leadership" (710). As the author later points out, this function of the Church further increased after 1877. According to Ahlstrom, "After 1877, as Jim Crow laws, intimidation, and political suppression steadily intensified, this function of the church increased in significance. More than ever it became a vital means of preserving a sense of racial solidarity" (710). Another author who also emphasizes the political power of the Black Church is E. U. Essien –Udom. According to the author, black churches "served a four-fold relationship to black nationalism: they were the best-organized institution in the Afro-American community; they provided for greater participation among blacks than any other organization; the leadership of the church was largely independent of white control; and the church provided an important center of social life for its members" (According to Pinkney, p. 17). However, as Pinkney further adds, "Though the black church can hardly be considered nationalist in its general orientation, it did serve to foster the drive for autonomy in the black community" (17-18). David G. Hackett agrees with this claim and, in his article, goes so far as to say that many northern missionaries "saw the black church as a means through which God was acting in history to uplift the black race" (299). In other words, even though the Black Church was not a nationalist institution, it was still seen as an instrument in the fight

against racial injustice, because of its power in inseminating ideas of racial equality and black power. The same thought is also expressed by James H. Cone; however, unlike his peers, Cone focuses more on the spiritual side of this ordeal. According to Cone, what helped black people in their fight for freedom and equality was not the institution, but God himself. As the author claims, "Many black Christians believed that it was only a matter of a little time before Jesus would reveal the gospel truth to whites, and slavery and segregation would come tumbling down like the walls of Jericho. That was the basis of the optimism among black Christians" (403).

However, it is important to note that the Black Church's opinions on racial injustice did not only stay in the realm of thought. Unlike other religious institutions whose leaders supported civil causes only with words (they printed out pamphlets, talked about the problems in their sermons, etc.); Black Churches actively participated in causes for social change. As Winthrop S. Hudson contends,

> The Supreme Court decision of 1954, which put an end to the 'separate but equal' doctrine in public education, triggered a massive civil rights movement in which the black churches played the predominant role. A spectacular illustration of this was the bus boycott in Montgomery, Alabama, in 1955-56, which was sparked by Rosa Parks' refusal to move to the back of a bus, led by the local clergy, and made Martin Luther King, Jr., a national figure. Subsequent 'freedom rides' to eliminate discrimination in interstate travel, 'sit-ins' and 'demonstrations' to obtain equal access to public accommodations, and voter registration drives were usually planned and organized in the black churches and often led by their pastors. (327)

As can be seen from the quote above, both the churchgoers and pastors alike actively participated in the fights against racial injustice. It is important to note that pastors did not only invite their congregations to join the action, but they also made an example of themselves. As stated before, black pastors were, just like the members of their community, also willing participants and organizers of the said actions. Besides participating in nonviolent actions against racism, pastors also made sure that all of the members of their community were given a voice by reminding them, as well as helping them, register themselves for voting. Another author who also points to the active participation of religious leaders in civil rights actions is Martin E. Marty. According to the author,

> Religion long had played a major part in black struggles for freedom. Most of the twentieth-century black leaders, like their predecessors, were 'reverends' – agents of the churches, which remained the strongest institutions blacks possessed. Now as before, ever since slaveholders and evangelists first taught it to them, the language of their calls for freedom sounded biblical. They saw their own story in the exodus of Israel from slavery and in the story of a suffering Jesus who triumphed. (440)

In other words, black people, encouraged by their religious leaders, used religious texts as an example of what they were supposed to do and saw the said texts as a prophecy of some sort. Those texts, with their optimistic nature, were giving them hope that they too would one day be set free, just like religious characters, because their faith, too, was equally strong. In some religious branches, this identification with religious characters and, above everything, with Jesus reached a completely different level. According to Albanese, "Many of the holiness-pentecostal Churches thought of Jesus as a black man, and as they did so, they articulated regard for blackness in itself. It was from its beginnings in these churches that blackness as a religious and ethnic symbol began the process of transforming African-American religion" (208).

4.3.3. DISILLUSIONMENT WITH CHURCHES AND CHRISTIANITY

From the days of slavery, spirituality, rather Black Christianity, played a significant role both in the fights for freedom and equality and in the identity creation of the blacks who had been forcefully taken from their homes and exploited in the new continent. However, the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a change, not only in the way Black people viewed religion but also in the way of life, especially that of the former slaves. Due to "the nationwide growth of industrialism and sweeping technological changes in southern agriculture" (Ahlstrom, p. 1055), the former slaves, who had already been looked down upon because of the color of their skin, were left no other choice but to move to urban centers in the North. As Pinn states, "The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries marked a significant migration of African Americans into northern (and southern) cities due to economic difficulties and sociopolitical oppression in the rural South and the promise of opportunity within urban areas" (8). Still, as the author later writes, what they found in the cities drastically differed from what they had been expecting. Not only was the economic situation

in the North equally as bad, but they were also, once again, left completely alone, far away from everything and everyone they had ever known. As Ahlstrom articulates, “One way of life, its social system and economic setting, its moral and spiritual atmosphere, was exchanged for another. Family structures lost the reinforcement provided by familiar neighbors, the local church, and the necessities of domestic agriculture” (1056). It was in this moment of isolation and complete unfamiliarity that they once again turned to spirituality for guidance. However, this time, God did not answer. According to Pinn, “Upon arrival in cities such as Chicago, migrants found themselves economically frustrated and socially isolated. Many naturally turned to African American churches for assistance only to find that many of them were more interested in safeguarding their mainstream status than in meeting the socioeconomic and spiritual needs of the new arrivals” (8). Incited by this lack of care presented by Black churches and new ways of life, many of them turned to other institutions for comfort. And so, the great change in the religious life of Blacks was started.

Various authors will later use this migration as the starting point for the changes in the religious life of Blacks. One of them is the aforementioned Ahlstrom, who states, “Since 1900 nearly every new development in black religion has been a corollary of the great migration and the resulting shift of life styles” (1056). Another author who notes the significance of this shift in the religious life of Blacks is Albanese. As the author writes in her book, this change was not inspired just by spiritually. Apparently, it had more to do with the new environment and the aspirations of the new arrivals, rather than with the disillusionment in the Church itself. As the author states, “The migration to the North and to industrial cities had considerable implications for black churches. There was a sense of rootlessness and alienation as blacks contended with strange and hostile urban forces. Sociological divisions became more pronounced, and upper, middle, and lower classes more clearly defined” (207). If it weren’t for the economic differences, the Black Church could have possibly continued to exude its dominance over the black population of America. However, if one wanted to succeed, they had to embrace their American identity, rather than the African one. So, as Albanese emphasizes, “Like Jews and like Catholics, African-Americans who were upwardly mobile felt the pull of mainstream Protestantism. To be American meant, in some sense, to become more and more like the one center of gravity that Protestantism provided, and so some joined white denominations” (207).

Those who felt betrayed by the system and who thought it impossible to climb the ladder of American society, however, chose a completely different path. Instead of staying

true to the status quo, or, like many of their peers, moving on to the widely accepted and dominant form of Christianity, some of them decided to try to find their voice somewhere else. According to Pinn,

> These migrants found the goals of African American churches revolving around inclusion in the larger society at odds with their lower economic and social standing during the period before and after World War I. They needed a religious orientation or culture that better addressed their socioeconomic, spiritual, and political needs and questions. Numerous religious possibilities developed. (8)

5. AFRICAN AMERICANS AND ISLAM

As stated in the previous chapter, many members of the African American community, and Blacks in general, became disillusioned with both the Black Church and Christianity in general. When talking about the reasons behind this disillusionment, Aminah Beverly McCloud writes, "In many ways the actions of white Christians affirmed the notion that blacks needed to seek and find a religion of their own" (17). As for what these actions were, if it hasn't been made clear already, many authors point to poor economic conditions incited by the racial injustice[4] prevalent in the country, as well as to the issue of slavery that continued to plague the American society even after its dissolution. As many scholars point out, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the Blacks got tired of being treated like second-class citizens and started working on their own upliftment. One of the ways they decided to do that was by entirely rejecting everything imposed on them or anything that bore any semblance to the ruling system. When push came to shove, one of the first things to be rejected was the religion (Christianity). According to scholars, at the time, instead of Christianity, many more members of the Black community started to turn towards Islam. As McCloud in her article states, "Islam was a natural alternative for several reasons. Islamic conventions in storytelling and naming had been retained, for example, and many African Americans had met Muslim immigrants or had gained knowledge about Islam at the turn of the twentieth century from other sources" (17). James Baldwin also writes about the reasons why the Blacks turned toward Islam. As the author states, "God (Islamic God) is black. All black men belong to Islam; they have been chosen. And Islam shall rule the world" (66) because "The white God has not delivered them; perhaps the Black God will" (67). Even

[4] The racial injustice also posed a problem in itself.

though Baldwin purposefully misinterprets the messages of both Islam and Christianity and the images of their creators (Christianity was 'created' in the Middle East, a place inhabited by people of color, so it is preposterous to say that it was not created for them, or that it was a white God – created only for the whites), it is important to note that his view still gives a significant insight into the opinions of many Black Americans. As the author states, many Black Americans lost faith in Christianity mostly because it was unable to save them from the troubles they were in (slavery, racial segregation, etc.), so it is only natural that they decided to turn toward something else, in this case Islam.

However, it is also important to note that Islam did not appear in the U.S. only in the twentieth century, with the arrival of Asian and Arab immigrants, and when its popularity among the American population, primarily African Americans, started to grow. According to J. Gordon Melton, "Islam actually came into the country during the eighteenth century, brought by a few slaves who were Muslims, although their continuity with the present Muslim community is doubtful" (142). McCloud also states that "Islam began in what was to become the United States with slavery. It is estimated that 30 percent of the slaves taken from West Africa were Muslims. Documented also is the fact that these slaves attempted against all odds to keep Islamic practice alive" (17).

Nevertheless, there are also authors who claim that Islam played a part in American life way before the arrival of the first slaves. Some historical documents even point to the fact that Muslims first arrived in America long before the British colonies were even created. According to Allan Austin, a professor of African American studies, "African Muslims traveled with Spanish explorers while others arrived as servants in Spanish Florida and Louisiana. There is also evidence to suggest that a good percentage of the Africans brought to the North American colonies were Muslims who maintained dimensions of their faith" (According to Pinn, p. 8). In other words, not only did the Muslims arrive in America before the British settlers, but the first slaves also got to keep their Islamic practices, despite the ban of religion that was imposed on them. When talking about the evidence that points to the continuous use of Islamic practices, Austin mentions "advertisements for slaves with Islamic names such as 'Mamado'" (According to Pinn, p. 8) and "accounts of African Muslims such as Job Ben Solomon, a runaway slave, who could write and quote the Qur'an, and Bilali from Guinea, who lived on Sapelo Island in Georgia" (According to Pinn, p. 8). As the author writes, Bilali's descendants, in their interviews, spoke of their ancestor's practices, which point to the continuation of Islamic traditions and rituals despite the religious ban. According

to them, Bilali used Arabic, prayed five times a day, followed a special diet, passed down Islamic names to his children, and often bore witness to the faith, etc.

Another author who points to the resumption of Islamic tradition despite the ban on religion is the previously mentioned Joyner. In his article, Joyner quotes Charles Ball, one of the fugitive slaves. According to Ball, in the low country of Georgia and South Carolina, one could find a Muslim presence. As Ball notes, "I knew several who must have been, from what I have since learned, Mohammedans" (According to Joyner, p. 182). Ball continues his narration by explaining how he came to that conclusion. As he states, "There was one man on this plantation who prayed five times every day, always turning his face to the east" (According to Joyner, p. 182). After quoting Ball's account, Joyner adds evidence to further support the fugitive slave's claim. According to the author, "It has been estimated that as many as twenty percent of the enslaved Africans in America embraced Islam. There is evidence that Muslim slaves in coastal Georgia deliberately sought marriage partners of the same faith as late as the second generation. On some lowcountry plantations, Muslim slaves were given a ration of beef instead of pork" (182).

Even though Islam was brought to America by several African slaves, the faith, over time, vanished and was introduced back only in the late nineteenth century. A possible reason for the disappearance of Islam could be found in the fact that the masters tried to strip their slaves of everything familiar, religion included, to prevent them from using it as a reason for revolt. Another reason behind the disappearance of Islam could also be the fact that, at one point, masters started to Christianize their slaves, considering that Christianity proved to be a valuable tool in the dissemination of slavery (messages of servitude made slaves more complacent). However, in his work, Pinn claims that Islam did not disappear. As the author states, it just blended with Christianity. So much so that "Jesus, for example, was linked to Muhammad" (8).

5.1. BLACK NATIONALISM AND ISLAM

As many of the previously mentioned authors in their work claim, Black Nationalism appeared way before the arrival, or, even better, before the reintroduction of Islam. According to the words of Pinkney, the first slave revolts could be seen as the first expressions of Black Nationalism. As the author states,

> Herbert Aptheker traces the first slave revolt back to 1526 in what is now South Carolina, and the first serious slave conspiracy is said to date back to the Virginia colony in 1663. Later in the colonial era two blacks were burned alive and an additional 29 were executed in New York City in 1741 for their part in a slave conspiracy that left many buildings destroyed by fire. Such conspiracies and revolts continued throughout the period of legal slavery.
>
> In addition, black solidarity manifested itself in the early years through petitions by slaves for freedom, especially immediately prior to and during the Revolutionary War. In 1773, for example, the slaves of Massachusetts petitioned the colonial governing officials to grant them the freedom to work in order to earn money for transportation to, as they put it, 'some part of the Coast of Africa, where we propose a settlement.' After the Revolutionary War, Afro-American solidarity was expressed through the formation of black organizations, established for a variety of purposes, such as the Philadelphia Free African Society, founded in 1787, 'in order to support one another in sickness, and for the benefit of their widows and fatherless children.' (16)

Cone, on the other hand, states that Black Nationalism first appeared in the seventeenth century. However, because of the lack of historical data, it is impossible to know if the Nationalism movement was religiously motivated or not. As Cone states, "The roots of black nationalism go back to the seventeenth-century slave conspiracies, when Africans, longing for their homeland, banded together in a common struggle against slavery, because they knew that they were not created for servitude" (404). However, with the Christianization of the Blacks, the movement gained even more traction. As many authors claim, some of the most important reasons for the awakening of the movement were the facts that Christianization provided the Blacks with excuses to meet, it gave them the words and stories that were necessary to motivate them, and it arranged for them a place[5] to meet in secret and discuss the plights that had befallen them. As Cone writes, "This nationalist spirit was given high visibility in the slave revolts led by Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, and Nat Turner during the first third of the nineteenth century. But it was also found in the rise of mutual-aid societies, in the birth and growth of black-led churches and conventions, and in black-led emigration schemes" (404). For years, Christianity served as the breeding ground for

[5] In the beginning, they met in the woods and later were allowed to build their own churches.

Nationalist ideas to take hold. Because of it, it ultimately played a part of the leading institution in the fight for freedom.

Nevertheless, because of the Church's attitude towards white people[6], many of the Blacks turned their backs on the Church and decided to find another outlet for their nationalistic tendencies. As Cone states, "Nationalists, unlike integrationists, could not separate their resentment of servitude from the racial identity of the people responsible for it"[7] (405). According to scholars, this attitude of the Blacks is what ultimately pushed some of the Blacks toward Islamization.

In other words, Black Nationalists personified everything that had anything to do with America with the whites, who they saw as the greatest evil that had ever walked the Earth. As a result of this opinion, one of the things that was to be avoided was the notion of faith. According to the Blacks, faith, rather Christianity, was tightly connected with the U.S. and, as a result of that, with the white people. As such, it should have been avoided. Instead, the members of the Black community both looked into their past and inspected the world around them. That is when Islam presented itself as a savior and when Black Islam was ultimately born. Black Islam, unlike Black Christianity, did not promote peaceful cohabitation; on the contrary, it played a significant part in the radicalization of the Blacks who were finally out for vengeance.

5.1.1. THE NATION OF ISLAM

[6] The Church promoted peaceful coexistence between the whites and the Blacks.

[7] When talking about Black Nationalism and the divisions within the movement, Cone states, "The central claim of all black nationalists, past and present, is that black people are primarily Africans and not Americans. Unlike integrationists, nationalists do not define their significance and purpose as people by appealing to the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation, or even the white man's religion of Christianity. On the contrary, nationalists define their identity by their resistance to America and their determination to create a society based on their own African history and culture. The posture of rejecting America and accepting Africa is sometimes symbolized with such words as 'African,' 'black,' and 'blackness.' For example, Martin Delany, often called the father of black nationalism, boasted that there lived 'none blacker' than himself. While Douglass, in typical integrationist style, said, 'I thank God for making me a man simply,' he reported that 'Delany always thanks Him for making him a black man'" (405). However, it is also important to note that both nationalists and integrationists again experienced divisions within their own subcategories. As David Blatty states in his work, two integrationists, W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington often clashed over what Black Nationalism should be. While "Washington believed that it was economic independence and the ability to show themselves as productive members of society that would eventually lead Black people to true equality and that they should for the time being set aside any demands for civil rights,", Du Bois believed "that political action and agitation were the only way to achieve equality." (Blatty, https://www.biography.com/activists/web-dubois-vs-booker-t-washington)

One of the most vocal Black Nationalist groups was the Nation of Islam, a group formed by Master Wallace D. Fard Muhammad in 1930. However, the Nation of Islam was not the first such group established. When Pinkney writes about the beginning of Black Nationalism, the author states,

> During the period of slavery, and the years between the Civil War and the 1930s, much of black nationalist expression was dominated by individual leaders. This is not to say that these individuals were unable to build mass movements, for they frequently did: rather, the movements tended to center around the personalities of the leaders. In most cases black nationalism manifested itself in emigration movements. This is especially true of the earliest organized expressions, for many of the leaders were convinced that Afro-Americans could never achieve equality with their white counterparts. Most of these movements centered on repatriation of blacks to Africa, but others advocated resettlement to other areas. The brutality of slavery and the failure of Reconstruction meant that many blacks, leaders and rank and file, had lost all hope of peaceful coexistence between black and white Americans. (18)

According to Albanese, Ahlstrom, Cone, Bruce B. Lawrence, Kathryn Lofton, and Pinn, the group was motivated by two other organizations that had been active prior to the creation of the Nation of Islam (NOI) and one of which had expressed these separatist tendencies that were later used as an inspiration for the plan and program of the Nation. According to the authors, the first inspiration for NOI was a movement started by Marcus M. Garvey, an immigrant from Jamaica who established The Universal Negro Improvement Association in 1914. Even though the Association was instrumental as an inspiration for NOI, it is necessary to note that it was not a Muslim group but an African Orthodox one. What makes Garvey so special for NOI are his thoughts on the concept of nation and Black Nationalism in general. According to Dawson,

> … this nationalist tradition defines the nation as a group of people who are defined by community and some sense of 'naturalness' in the ties that bind – a set of ties and bonds that are based on gendered concepts of the family. The term *family* is used and defined both in its immediate sense of a unit which has at its heart the physical reproduction of the nation, and in the metaphysical sense of the nation as one large, united family. Families are said to have 'heads,' and so must nations. Not all belong to the family, and the family must be protected from internal and external threats. Thus

> nations are about power: The power to define who belongs and who does not is critical to nationalist projects. Ultimately, some group – and often individuals – claim the leadership of the nation as the father claims to be head of the family. This claim has been interpreted by some nationalists as meaning that to be head of the 'black' family, to be 'head of the nation,' must mean to be head of state. Garvey made this point explicitly: "I asked 'Where is the black man's Government?' 'Where is his King and kingdom?' 'Where is his President, his country, and his ambassador, his army, his navy, his men of big affairs?' I could not find them, and then I declared, 'I will help make them'" (93).

As stated in numerous sources, Garvey also preached about a black God and, inspired by the Zionist movement, urged all Blacks to create a separate state in Africa that would house all of the former slaves, if there still were some, as well as their descendants. As Albanese writes in her book, "Although Garvey's dream was interrupted by his deportation in 1927 after accusations of financial fraud, his legacy of a religion of blackness lived on" (211)[8]. Not only did Garvey incite change among the Black population of America but his words also left an enormous mark on the way they later perceived themselves. According to Ahlstrom, "he had awakened the spirit of African nationalism among the urban masses. Like the organizations and churches of many ethnic minorities, Garvey's also contributed powerfully to the self-respect and group-consciousness of his followers and in the process exposed the degree to which many Afro-Americans were alienated from the white culture around them" (1066 – 1067).

The second organization that served as an inspiration for NOI, or as Lawrence claims, its forerunner, was the Moorish Science Temple first founded in 1913 by Timothy Drew, or Noble Drew Ali. According to the works of various scholars, the dominant teaching of the 'Moorish Americans' claimed that all blacks were the Asiatic, or rather Moors, and therefore Muslims. As Hudson claims, 'Moorish Americans' preached that they had found their inspiration in the Koran, but according to Pinn, they also "took Christian principles and understanding of African Americans as Asiatic, or Moors, and encouraged a familiarity with non-Western thought" (8). Some of those non-Western teachings included the thought of Buddha, Confucius, Jesus, and Muhammad. Now, as for why Lawrence called 'Moorish Americans' forerunners of NOI, it is necessary to note that, besides the thought of Black

[8] For more information on Marcus M. Garvey and The Universal Negro Improvement Association, see Albanese, p. 211; Ahlstrom, pp. 1066 – 1067; Cone, pp. 407 – 408; Lawrence, p. 125; and Lofton, p. 15.

Americans united under the religion of Islam, most 'Moorish Americans' went on to become the followers of the Nation of Islam. Even though the Moorish Science Temple still exists, the majority of their followers left the organization right after the assassination of Drew Ali and joined the Nation of Islam.[9]

According to Ahlstrom, "After Drew's (Drew Ali) death, a struggle for the succession to leadership and a splintering of the movement ensued." (1067). One of the most vocal claimants for the leadership position of 'Moorish Americans' was Wallace D. Fard (Wali Farad Muhammad), who, in 1930, began to gather followers in Detroit. According to some of the accounts, Fard claimed that he was a reincarnation of Drew Ali and started to spread a message similar to that of Drew Ali. Ultimately, he opened a Temple of Islam in Detroit which had around eight thousand followers. Due to the fast popularization of the movement, which resulted in the constant growth of the movement's followers, Fard later opened another temple in Chicago which was led by his most trusted lieutenant, Robert Poole, who later took the name Elijah Muhammad. After Fard's sudden and mysterious disappearance in 1934, another fight for leadership ensued, and the leader of Temple Number Two, Elijah Muhammad, ended victorious.

Despite the group's prior establishment and enviable following, the Nation of Islam took its widely-known shape only after the role of its leader was awarded to Elijah Muhammad. As Ahlstrom writes,

> Elijah Muhammad's authority rested on a unique claim that the will of Allah himself had been communicated to him and published in *The Supreme Wisdom* and successive issues of *Muhammad Speaks*. According to these teachings the Negroes of North America (the Black Nation) are to be led into their true inheritance as members of the ancient tribe of Shabazz, which looks to Abraham as its patriarch and to which all the world's non-white peoples belong. They will be led by the Nation of Islam, the followers of Elijah Muhammad. Caucasian people are an inferior, latter-day offshoot of the Black Asiatic Nation. The American Negro's self-hate (his negative estimate of blackness) is thus replaced by a strong sense of triumphant peoplehood. (1068)

In other words, the message of Elijah Muhammad rested entirely on the notion of Black supremacy. Not only that, but the organization's most popular doctrine was that white people

[9] For more information on Drew Ali and the Moorish Science Temple, see Albanese, pp. 211 – 212; Alhstrom, pp. 1067 – 1068; Cone, p. 408; Hudson, p. 329; Lawrence, p. 125; Lofton, pp. 15 – 16; and Pinn, p. 8.

were truly evil. According to Elijah, all of the black members of the American community came from the same tribe, which is why they should stick together. Namely, the principal purpose of the Nation of Islam was to make sure that the debt of the white man was paid in full. To be able to explain this claim correctly, one must look at the organization's Manifesto, a document written in 1964 and titled "What the Muslims Want?" In the Manifesto, Elijah writes a list of wants that should be completed by white people, as an apology for the wrongdoings they had inflicted upon the Blacks, both during the time of slavery and afterward. Some of these wants include the exemption from taxation for all Blacks (only for a certain time period, until the debt of slavery is paid off), the establishment of separate schools and universities for Blacks, the release from prison of all Black people incarcerated at the time, the establishment of an independent state where only Black people would live, full freedom and political equality, the prohibition of inter-marriage and race-mixing in general, etc.[10]

Still, it is necessary to note that these claims not only show the list of things to be done (a way in which the Black Nationalism of NOI functioned) but also how the faith of the Nation of Islam functioned. According to various authors, the Islam of the Nation of Islam did not follow the traditional rules of Sunni Islam. On the contrary, it promoted the exclusion of certain members of the world (white people), as well as advocated for Black supremacy, which goes completely against every postulate of Islam, which is, in general, an inclusionary religion. According to Lawrence,

> Their strict discipline included prayer five times a day, but with minimal attention to Arabic as the language of prayer. Modest dress was obligatory – black suit, white shirt, and bow ties for men; long dresses, head coverings, and no makeup for women. Not only pork and alcohol were to be avoided but also any contact with white society; intermarriage, whether with Anglo-American Christians or with other Muslims of different races, was strictly forbidden. Social values were transmitted and reinforced through schools linked to Nation of Islam temples; their curriculum stressed separation from whites and, above all, pride in African Muslim heritage. (126)

Another author who writes about the Islam of NOI is Baldwin, who, in his essay, summarizes a conversation he had with Elijah Muhammad. According to the author,

[10] For a detailed list of wants and needs of the Nation of Islam, look up Muhammad, Elijah, p. 863 – 864

> They (white men) want black men to believe that they, like white men, once lived in caves and swung from trees and ate their meat raw and did not have the power of speech. But this is not true. Black men were never in such a condition. Allah allowed the Devil, through his scientists, to carry on infernal experiments, which resulted, finally, in the creation of the devil known as the white man, and later, even more disastrously, in the creation of the white woman. And it was decreed that these monstrous creatures should rule the earth for a certain number of years – I forgot how many thousands, but, in any case, their rule now is ending, and Allah, who had never approved of the creation of the white man in the first place (who knows him, in fact, to be not a man at all but a devil), is anxious to restore the rule of peace that the rise of the white man totally destroyed. There is thus, by definition, no virtue in white people, and since they are another creation entirely and can no more, by breeding, become black than a cat, by breeding, can become a horse, there is no hope for them. (76)

However, it is also necessary to note that the Nation of Islam did not only present dubious sides of Black Islam, such as promoting Black supremacy but that it also created positive changes within the community itself. Baldwin writes that

> Elijah Muhammad has been able to do what generations of welfare workers and committees and resolutions and reports and housing projects and playgrounds have failed to do: to heal and redeem drunkards and junkies, to convert people who have come out of prison and to keep them out, to make men chaste and women virtuous, and to invest both the male and the female with a pride and a serenity that hang about them like an unfailing light. He has done all these things, which our Christian church has spectacularly failed to do. (60 – 61)

According to McCloud, mosques created by African American Muslims played a significant role in the development of the community itself. As the author states, “To assist in their development, members created savings plans at mosques and temples that formed the beginnings of an economic effort to be self sustaining entities” (18). Not only that but there were also “community newspapers that endeavored to sell products made in the community and provided information on American society and African affairs and culture” (18). According to the same author, African American Muslims also made significant changes in education and business. As McCloud writes,

> Muhammad's Universities in the Nation of Islam formed the first African American Muslim school system in the 1940s. These schools provided alternative education for black youth with an emphasis on Islamic studies and Arabic along with traditional Western studies. Many more Islamic elementary schools opened in the 1960s as Muslims sought alternatives to the public school system. Muslim businesses had already begun to be mainstays in the black community, providing a variety of services such as cleaning, laundries, produce, books, and wares from abroad. (19)

Despite their racist tendencies, it is necessary to emphasize that the African American Muslim community (the Nation of Islam members included) played a significant role in the integration of Muslim immigrants who arrived in the U.S. in the 1960s, after the lifting of the immigration restraints on Asians. According to McCloud, "Many of these immigrants would find their first religious homes in African American Muslim community" (19)[11].

5.1.2. MALCOLM X

According to various authors, significant growth in the African American Muslim population happened in the 1950s and 1960s "despite efforts by the FBI … to limit its scope through harassment of its leaders" (Lawrence, p. 126) When talking about the reasons behind this sudden growth in numbers, the authors state that it had something to do with the appearance of Malcolm X on the Black Nationalist scene. As Hudson states in his work, "the brief but charismatic leadership of Malcolm X and the conversion of Cassius Clay (Muhammad Ali) gave major impetus to the Muslims" (329).

Malcolm X (Malcolm Little), perhaps the most famous African-American Muslim, was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1925, as one of many children of a Baptist preacher who supported the previously mentioned Marcus Garvey and his cause. According to Malcolm himself, his father "believed, as did Marcus Garvey, that freedom, independence and self-respect could never be achieved by the Negro in America, and that therefore the Negro should leave America to the white man and return to his African land of origin" (Malcolm X, p. 2). When Malcolm was six, his father got brutally murdered which ultimately resulted in his mother's confinement in a mental institution. Malcolm and his siblings became wards of the

[11] For more information on the Nation of Islam, please consult Albanese, p. 212; Ahlstrom, pp. 1067 – 1068; Cone, pp. 408 – 409; Lawrence, pp. 125 – 126; Lofton, p. 16; Marty, pp. 444 – 445; McCloud, pp. 18 – 19; and Pinn, p. 9.

state. At the age of thirteen he got expelled and sent to a reform school from where he moved to another foster family and started to academically thrive. Malcolm spent most of his youth in Michigan but moved to Boston after finishing the eighth grade. In Boston, Malcolm, for the first time, discovered the black community, or rather, it was there that he, for the first time, came in contact with the population that was predominantly black, which influenced the way in which he viewed people around him. As explained in his autobiography, "I continued to think constantly about all that I had seen in Boston, and about the way I had felt there. I know now that it was the sense of being a real part of a mass of my own kind, for the first time" (46). In other words, for the first time in his life, Malcolm felt like he belonged somewhere, because, for the first time in his life, he was not surrounded by just whites, but he got to feel the presence of his people as well.

One of the key changes in Malcolm's life, happened in 1946, when Malcolm went to prison on a burglary charge. According to him, it was there that he came in contact with Islam. As stated in his book, "I had sunk to the very bottom of the American white man's society when—soon now, in prison—I found Allah and the religion of Islam and it completely transformed my life" (164). By 1952, Malcolm was so enamored with the cause that he traveled around the country, preaching Islamization.

Considering that Malcolm was a member of the Nation of Islam, it is necessary to note that his Islam, too, just like that of NOI, drastically differed from Orthodox Islam. Malcolm's Islam was very radical. So much so that, at one point, it seemed that his was more radical than that of NOI. He, like many of his peers, also supported Black supremacy. However, despite their line of thought being the same, Malcolm's views were, at one point, so radical that even Elijah Muhammad started to consider him a hazard. As Marty writes in his book,

> Though in person the disciple could be gentle, he used hate as an instrument against Christians like Martin Luther King. When a jet plane full of art patrons from Atlanta crashed in France, Malcolm called it 'a very beautiful thing,' an answer to prayer: 'We call on our God, and He gets rid of 120 of them at one whop.' Was this kind of gloating over a crash different, he asked, than when Americans thanked God after they dropped a bomb on Hiroshima that killed a hundred thousand Japanese? 'You did it in the name of God; … we rely on God.' (445)

The turning point in Malcolm's and the Nation of Islam's relationship happened in 1963, after the assassination of, at the time, the American President, John F. Kennedy. According to

Marty, “Malcolm X finally overstepped by rejoicing over ‘the chickens coming home to roost’” (445). As the author later writes, this event caused Elijah Muhammad’s ultimate silencing of the disciple and afterward incited Muhammad to freeze him out completely.

In 1964, after a pilgrimage to Mecca, Malcolm X officially parted with the Nation of Islam. As Lawrence writes, “he denounced the Nation of Islam as itself non-Islamic because it preached separation of races while universal Islam, as he had observed during the pilgrimage, promoted the equality of all persons regardless of race” (126). In his own words,

> I only knew what I had left in America, and how it contrasted with what I had found in the Muslim world. About twenty of us Muslims who had finished the Hajj were sitting in a huge tent on Mount Arafat. As a Muslim from America, I was the center of attention. They asked me what about the Hajj had impressed me the most. One of the several who spoke English asked; they translated my answers for the others. My answer to that question was not the one they expected, but it drove home my point. I said, “The brotherhood! The people of all races, colors, from all over the world coming together as one! It has proved to me the power of the One God.” (357)

Even though he still held hope for complete separation between the Blacks and the whites, he no longer sounded so radical or violent. Instead, he devoted himself completely to Orthodox Islam and peaceful cohabitation between the races. Ultimately, he became El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz in a Sunni Muslim sect. In his later speeches, Malcolm professed his disdain for violence by saying, “Even I prefer ballots to bullets” (Marty, p. 446). It is also necessary to note that the man who once despised the whites, all of a sudden started to praise them. As Marty claims in his book, “While whites had once been devils, now he could speak in praise of three who gave their lives in Mississippi for black causes” (446).

Malcolm X died in 1965, after being shot on the stage set up in Audubon Ballroom, where he was giving a speech. However, his relevance in the African American Muslim community did not diminish. As Marty states, even after his assassination, “His followers continued to read his spiritual history, with its appeal for the land.” and Malcolm himself “entered the black pantheon” (446)[12].

[12] For more information on Malcolm X, please see Albanese, p. 213; Ahlstrom, pp. 1068 – 1070; Cone, pp. 409 – 410; Lawrence, pp. 126 – 127; Lofton, p. 16; and Marty, pp. 445 – 446.

5.1.3. BLACK NATIONALISM TODAY – THE 'NATIONS' OF ISLAM AND HIP-HOP

After the death of Elijah Muhammad in 1975, "the legacy of Malcolm X blossomed into full view" (Lawrence, p. 126). According to the writings of various authors, following the death of their leader, the Nation of Islam split into two factions. The first faction (the official one) was willed to one of Elijah Muhammad's sons, Wallace (Warith Deen) Muhammad. Wallace, unlike his father, looked up to his friend Malcolm X and ultimately decided to follow his path of Islam instead of the one promoted by his father. He departed from the militaristic and racist views that had been a part of the group until Elijah's death. Instead, he turned towards the official form of Islam (Sunni Islam) that strived towards inclusion of all community members, no matter the color of their skin. Together with the changes in the ideology, this faction also changed its name. Instead of the Nation of Islam, they now fashioned a new name, the Muslim American Community; however, today, they are known just as Muslim Americans. Except for their change in ideology, which has drastically moved away from the violent and separatist calls for action by the Nation of Islam, the changes can also be found in their way of life. Unlike their predecessors, the Muslim community under Wallace Muhammad started to follow the rules of traditional Islam. As R. Kevin Jaques and Donna L. Meigs-Jaques write,

> Many original members kept their previous conversion names and continued to use many of the accoutrements of worship common in the NOI. Second- and third-generation members, however, have been more willing to adopt more mainstream aspects of Sunni piety. This generational change is most noticeable in modes of dress. Older women who followed Warith Deen into Sunni Islam still dress in clothing more acceptable in the NOI, wearing hats with brims and long, Western-style dresses. Their daughters, however, tend to wear head-scarves covering their hair, which is shaped into a bun in the back, and their granddaughters wear more traditional *hijabs* (headscarves covering their hair, ears, and neck). Similarly, men who came out of the NOI tend to wear Western-style suits, whereas their sons and grandsons tend to wear *shawar khamis* (baggy trousers and long shirts more common in immigrant communities from South Asia) to worship services. (136)

However, as previously stated, this was not the only faction of the new Nation of Islam. In 1978, Louis Farrakhan, one of the disciples of Elijah Muhammad, "declared himself the leader of the rump Nation of Islam, a successor to the original Nation of Islam but with fewer followers" (Lawrence, p. 127). As Lawrence further states, Farrakhan's faction, unlike that of

Wallace, continued following the original ideologies of the Nation of Islam and resumed their Nationalistic actions and protests. According to Lawrence, "His (Farrakhan's) successful Million Man March in 1997 mobilized African American men, both Muslim and non-Muslim, to converge on Washington D.C., and he continues to advocate social and political issues that call attention to the plight of an African American underclass that has been ignored by the dominant Euro-American overclass" (127). Nevertheless, it is also necessary to note that, despite the continuation of the tradition of the Nation of Islam, Farrakhan's following was drastically lower than that of Wallace Muhammad. A possible reason for this avoidance of Farrakhan's faction could be found in the fact that Wallace and his followers proclaimed that Farrakhan was a heretic, together with all those who followed him.[13]

Even though religious institutions and organizations worked perfectly well in the disseminating Islamic and Nationalistic ideas, another, faster way to accomplish this was also needed. Over the years, popular culture played, and still plays, a significant part in the dissemination of various ideas and ideologies and, at one point, some of those ideas and ideologies also included the ideologies of both Black Nationalism and Islam. One of the most valuable tools in transmitting these ideas was hip-hop, a style of music created in the 1970s[14] as a response to 'urban renewal'. Even though the number of artists promoting Black Nationalist ideas to their fans is significant, it is important to note that there are very few who promote both the ideas of Black Nationalism and Islam. The most prominent names in the dissemination of both of these ideas and ideologies include a hip-hop group, The Last Poets, and a veteran emcee Yasiin Bey (previously known as Mos Def). According to Kugler, the Last Poets formed in 1968, in Harlem, in New York City and Bengal, together with many of her contemporaries, considers them to be the founders of hip-hop. As many state, they are most known for their „confrontational delivery and socially conscious lyrics" (Kugler) that often helped disseminate the previously mentioned ideologies. However, it is also necessary to note that these lyrics were not accidental but an active decision made by all the members of the group(s)[15].

As it is stated by Kugler, all of the members of the group(s) shared „an interest in developing a new Black Nationalist poetry to respond to the assassinations of Malcolm

[13] For more information on two factions that came to fruition after the death of Elijah Muhammad, see Albanese, p. 214; Jaques and Meigs-Jaques, p. 136; Lawrence, pp. 126 – 127; Marty, pp. 447; and Pinn, p. 9
[14] Even though hip-hop predominantly described a musical style, it also described fashion and dance expression.
[15] Right after its formation, the group split into two groups that carried the same name. It is also important to note that the members regularly switched places from one group to another.

X (1965) and Martin Luther King, Jr. (1968). Nelson's[16] vision was to present an image of Black unity and to expose the Black community's enemies and oppressors" (Kugler). One of the members of the group, Abiodun Oyewole, at one point, when talking about the formation of the group itself, stated, "Growing up, I was scheduled to be a nice little coloured guy. I was liked by everybody, but when they killed Dr King, all bets were off" (Bengal). What further points to this political activism of the group is the fact that their debut took place „on May 19, 1968, at an event in Harlem commemorating the birthday of Malcolm X" (Kugler). Bengal later claims that the Last Poets' music has never been as significant as it is today, because, as she writes, "Half a century later, the slaughter continues daily, in the form of assaults, school shootings and excessive police force. "

Another author who points to the usage of popular culture in the dissemination of Black Nationalism and Islam is Dawson. According to one of the author's studies, "Appreciation of rap increases support for a number of items that are correlated with support of black nationalism. Rap artists such as Paris and Public Enemy sprinkle their cuts with praise for Louis Farrakhan. Farrakhan's speeches are often sampled for use in many group's materials. Both exposure to and appreciation for rap increase the likelihood of supporting Farrakhan by 16 percent" (128).

Although Islam played a significant role in the widespread of Black Nationalist ideologies, it is necessary to note that it, over time, lost in importance. As Marty writes in his book,

> "When the Nation of Islam declined in influence as Wallace Muhammad, the son of the founder, came to terms with whites, Orthodox Islam made headway among American blacks. 'Africanity' and African spiritual influences now seemed less exotic and threatening to whites, and less promising to blacks, who used their search for African roots to locate themselves in white America. The conventional black Baptist and Methodist churches survived as centers of power." (447)

In other words, Black Americans, once again, turned to churches and Christianity for support in their fight against racial inequality. However, this time, inspired by Christian ideologies and humbled by the lessons they had learned during their time in the Islamic community, they were not looking to create a society based on the racial superiority of a particular group of

[16] One of the founding members of the group.

people; or rather, they were looking to form a peaceful society in which all could coexist in peace.

5.2. REACTIONS TO BLACK NATIONALISM INFUSSED WITH ISLAMIC IDEOLOGIES

Even though Islam gave power and hope to Black Americans – it connected them to their African roots[17] at the time when they were most ardently plagued by questions of their own identity – it also received a fair amount of criticism from American people precisely because of its connection to the group. According to Marty, many African American Christians pointed to the violence often expressed by the group. One of those Christians was a famous minister, Martin Luther King, who played a significant role in the civil rights movement and often stood on the opposite side of the Nation of Islam, despite the similar goal they both had in mind. King raised the specter of violence by the Black Muslim group as a way to motivate white Americans into action. As Marty writes, "The minister called attention to the burgeoning and potentially violent Black Muslim movement, which loomed as a threat should white Americans continue to deny rights. 'It is made up of people who have lost faith in America, who have absolutely repudiated Christianity, and who have concluded that the white man is an incurable 'devil,'' added King" (442).

However, it is necessary to note that Black Christians and white Americans were not the only ones who harbored negative opinions towards Black Muslims and their movement. As Lawrence claims, the universal Muslim community, predominantly American Muslims, also had problems with Islam presented by the Nation of Islam and all its members. At one point (during the leadership of Farrakhan), the universal Sunni Muslim community regarded the Nation of Islam (Farrakhan's faction) and its followers as heretics. Even though Wallace's faction was acknowledged as the official Orthodox Muslim community in America, some Muslims considered them (still do) less Muslim than the South Asian ones. When talking about the reasons behind this thought, Lawrence states, "They will remain distinctive markers of cultural disparities that, despite creedal and ritual sympathies, separate African American from South Asian Muslims. Their basis is a racialized class prejudice against African

[17] Some of the slaves were Muslim before they stepped foot on the American continent.

Americans that predates the twentieth century and circulates beyond the parameters of a Muslim American community, however broadly defined its membership" (127).

In other words, just like white Americans, many Sunni Muslims cannot accept Black Muslims as one of their own, because of the other factors, such as their economic conditions. Although they all are brothers in faith, their way of life, for some, pose too big of a problem to dismiss. It is for this reason that they were ultimately treated as less than.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, religion has always played a significant part in Black Americans' identity. It was the only thing people could turn to when all other similarities between them ceased to exist. As argued initially, African Americans were forcefully taken away from their families and their homes. Everything they had ever known was stripped away (to prevent them from forming bonds with one another and ultimately concocting plans for their escape), and they were forbidden from using their own languages. The only thing they had left to give them hope in this desolate and unfamiliar place was faith, faith in a supernatural being that would one day come and save them from their shackles. However, ultimately, the oppressor took that as well. It was only after some time of their captivity had passed that the European settlers started to Christianize the slaves, both to have an excuse for so many wrongdoings they had committed but also as a way to control them, considering they appeared fiercer than they had expected them to be. As explained in the third chapter of this paper, after so much time without faith, Christianity gave the slaves hope that everything would once again be good. What convinced the slaves of a bright future even more were the Biblical stories, especially those stories in which God saved his people from slavery. For them, those stories represented a sign from God himself (they thought He was sending them the message that everything would soon come to its deserved end).

Nevertheless, the slaves very quickly realized that the religion they had thought was giving them hope was nothing but a ploy of white masters, who used Christianity only as a tool of control. So, disillusioned with Christianity and run down because of slavery, the slaves ultimately turned to the religion of their ancestors, Islam. According to them, Islam presented a true African character and, as such, worked as a more powerful tool in the fight for freedom

and equality. The following of Islam reached its peak in the 1950s and 1960s when one of the most vocal and well-received fighters for liberty, Malcolm X, arrived on the Black Nationalist scene. It was only after Malcolm's conversion to Orthodox Islam and his untimely death that the number of followers began to drop. Some of them, just like Malcolm, converted to the Sunni version of Islam, while others returned to Christianity and resumed their fight for freedom in a more peaceful manner. Even though there are still some Black Americans who follow Islam and fight for equality, it is necessary to note that their *modus operandi* has changed entirely and that their means no longer justify the end, as they had done numerous times before. Also, after Malcolm X and the death of Elijah Muhammad, the most prominent leader of the Nation of Islam, the dominance over Black Nationalism was passed down to the Black Christian Church, where it has stayed until today.

WORKS CITED

Albanese, Catherine L. *America – Religions and Religion*. Wadsworth Publishing Company, 1992.

Ahlstrom, Sydney E. *A Religious History of the American People.* Yale University Press, 1972.

Baldwin, James. "Down at the Cross". *The Fire Next Time*. Michael Joseph LTD, 1963, pp. 23 – 112.

Bengal, Rebecca. The Last Poets: the hip-hop forefathers who gave black America its voice. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/music/2018/may/18/the-last-poets-the-hip-hop-forefathers-who-gave-black-america-its-voice. May 18, 2018 (last accessed August 25, 2024)

Blatty, David. W.E.B. Du Bois and Booker T. Washington Had Clashing Ideologies During the Civil Rights Movement. *Biography*. https://www.biography.com/activists/web-dubois-vs-booker-t-washington. July 6, 2023 (last accessed September 16, 2024)

Butler, Jon. "Why Revolutionary America Wasn't a 'Christian Nation'". *Religion and the New Republic,* edited by James H. Hutson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 187 – 203.

Cone, James H. "'Martin and Malcom' – Integrationism and Nationalism in African American Religious History". *Religion and American Culture*, edited by David G. Hackett. Routledge, 2003, pp. 397 – 413.

Dawson, Michael C. *Black Visions : the Roots of Contemporary African-American Political Ideologies*. University of Chicago Press, 2001.

Dwayne Martin, Sandy. "African American Christianity". *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 10 – 13.

Hackett, David G. "'The Prince Hall Masons and the African American Church' – The Labors of Grand Master and Bishop James Walker Hood, 1831 – 1918". *Religion and American Culture*, edited by David G. Hackett. Routledge, 2003, pp. 289 – 315.

Hudson, Winthrop S., Religions in America. Macmillan Publishing Company, Collier Macmillan Publishers, 1987.

Jakelić, Slavica. *Collectivistic Religions – Religion, Choice, and Identity in Late Modernity*. Ashgate, 2010.

Jaques, R. Kevin and Donna L. Meigs-Jaques. ”Conversion to Islam”. *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 135 – 137.

Joyner, Charles. “’Believer I Know’ - The Emergence of African American Christianity”. *Religion and American Culture*, edited by David G. Hackett. Routledge, 2003, pp. 179 – 205.

Kitagawa, Audrey E. “Globalization as the Fuel of Religious and Ethnic Conflicts”. *Globalization & Identity*, edited by Lum, Jeannie B. and Majid Tegranian, Transaction Publishers, 2006, pp. 62 – 70.

Kugler, Daniel. The Last Poets. *Encyclopedia Britannica*. https://www.britannica.com/topic/the-Last-Poets. (last accessed August 25, 2024)

Laoust, Henri. *Raskoli u Islamu*. Translated by Tarik Haverić, Naprijed, 1989.

Lawrence, Bruce B. “Islam in America”. *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 125 – 132.

Lofton, Kathryn. “African American Religious Leaders”. *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 13 – 17.

Malcolm X. *The Autobiography of Malcolm X as told to Alex Haley*. The Random House Publishing Group,1992.

Marty, Martin E. *Pilgrims in Their Own Land – 500 Years of Religion in America*. Penguin Books, 1985.

McCloud, Aminah Beverly. “African Americans and Islam”. *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 17 – 19.

Melton, J. Gordon. *American Religions – An Illustrated History.* ABC-CLIO, 2000.

Muhammad, Elijah. "'What the Muslims Want,' from the Nation of Islam (1964)". *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume III)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 863 – 864.

Noll, Mark A. "Evangelicals in the American Founding and Evangelical Political Mobilization Today". *Religion and the New Republic,* edited by James H. Hutson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 137 – 159.

Novak, Michael. "The Influence of Judaism and Christianity on the American Founding". *Religion and the New Republic,* edited by James H. Hutson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 159 – 187.

Pinkney, Alphonso. *Red, Black, and Green: Black Nationalism in the United States*. Cambridge University Press, 1978.

Pinn, Anthony B. "African American Religions". *Religion and American Cultures: An Encyclopedia of Traditions, Diversity, and Popular Expressions (Volume I)*, edited by Laderman, Gary & Luis León. ABC-CLIO, 2003, pp. 3 – 9.

Raboteau, Albert J. "African Americans, Exodus, and the American Israel". *Religion and American Culture*, edited by David G. Hackett. Routledge, 2003, pp. 73 – 89.

Witte, Jr., John. "'A Most Mild and Equitable Establishment of Religion': John Adams and the Massachusetts Experiment". *Religion and the New Republic,* edited by James H. Hutson, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000, pp. 1 – 41.

ABSTRACT

This paper deals with the topic of Black Nationalism, or rather with the way it was being spread within the Black community with the help of Islam. At the beginning of the paper, readers are introduced to the theoretical background of identity. With the help of the works of various authors, readers are given an insight into how religion influences the creation of one's identity. Afterward, the American situation is explained in detail – whether religion was important in its creation, if so, which one; why America turned to secularism, etc. The third chapter deals with the appearance of Black Nationalism within the confines of Black churches. Readers are presented with the historical background of Christianization, the awakening of Black Nationalism, and ultimate disillusionment with Christianity. Finally, the reasons for conversion to Islam are explained. Readers are given an insight into some of the most prominent Islamic groups and individuals that played a significant role in disseminating Black Nationalism. At the end of the chapter, the contemporary situation is presented, as well as reactions to the movement, both from the Black Church, its members, and the entire Islamic world.

Keywords: Black Nationalism, Islam, Black Christianity, identity