

# African american family and resistance



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Religion played a very important role for the slaves. It was often in the slave quarters where the slaves gathered in congregation after a long hard day to pray for what they wished as they wished. It was their own form of solace, an escape into a world of hope where there was a possibility of deliverance from a life of hardship and injustice to that of ease and justice. Though most of the slaves had been converted, forcefully or otherwise, to one form of Christianity or another, they still held fast to some of their old beliefs and carried out their old religious rituals, often in secret, within the slave quarters.

In the late eighteenth century, Methodists formulated strong rules against slavery, claiming it to be contrary to the laws of God, and also threatening to excommunicate all slaveholders who did not free their slaves. However, it was not until the rebellion of Nat Turner in 1831 that the white slave owners truly became afraid for their lives. With the view of preserving their lives and their way of life, the southern slave owners got laws passed restricting the rights of the slaves to hold meetings, whether religious or otherwise, and even to read or write. They feared that once the slaves were allowed to do all this on their own, they would no longer be able to be controlled by the slave owners.

The reasons behind the slave owners wish for control over the religious schooling of their slaves was not only that by this method they could ensure that the slaves learned to turn the proverbial other cheek, as Christianity preached, but also that this was the only way to ensure that the slaves did not read the bible on their own and got their own message from it, like that of the Exodus. By ensuring that the religious teaching remained in the hands of the whites, the slave owners ensured that only the message they wanted

to send across would reach the slaves. One can say that it was their way of portraying Christianity in a light they wished to make the slaves docile and subservient. A lot of this teaching was designed to prevent the slaves from mounting any insurrection and to ensure there were no rebellious thoughts fostering in the minds of the slaves due to a free reading of the Bible by the slaves themselves.

In a way Christianity does not deal directly with the prohibition of slavery, there is no verse that specifically denounces it, however, there are chapters in the Bible, especially the Old Testament, that lay bare the fact that whenever there is oppression, God leads the oppressed to safety and punishes the oppressors. It was just this message that the slave owners did not want the slaves to hear, or read. It is, therefore, more apt to say that the slave owners twisted religion for their own purpose and made it out so that the slaves could psychologically endure their oppression with "peace".

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