

Religion role in douglass narrative story expository essay



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Frederick Douglass was a slave in America where there were a lot of inequalities between the slaveholders and the slaves. Slaves were mistreated in terms of being whipped, not given enough to eat, poor resting conditions as their bed was just the floor; generally slaves hardly received the basic needs from their masters.

Both parties happened to believe and claim to practice the same religion- Christianity. One fails to understand why the inequalities and yet they both practiced the same faith. Religion therefore as presented in Douglass narrative story serves two roles; basically the symbolic functions and the narrative functions. This discussion therefore is inclusive of role played by religion in depth as the Christianity of the white south contrast to that of the black slave.

To start with, religion has been used to justify the suffering of the black slaves. The religious slaveholders oppressed the slaves as they argued that God admitted for the slave existence when He cursed Ham. This is found in the Christian teachings as they used the bible as their guide.

According to the scripture in the book of Genesis chapter 9 verses 24, Ham was cursed by the father Noah after he had seen the nakedness of his father and failed to cover him but instead told it to his brothers. Ham was then cursed into the bondage of slavery thus the whites believed that they were right in the practice of slavery (Douglass 11).

According to the Christian teachings, God gave the masters power to discipline their servants if they failed to do as they were commanded. This is well illustrated when a crippled woman received a severe whip when she

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failed to do as she was commanded by her master. In these two instances and many others, the teachings from the bible were used to the exercise of more cruel acts.

Douglass however does not blame the religiosity which is on the Christian teachings in the slavery acts which they faced, but he instead gives thanks to God with the full knowledge that the religion where he practiced Christianity was based on good morals (Douglass 32). Douglass and other slaves practice of Christianity contrasts with the Christianity that is practiced by the slaveholders.

The Christianity practiced by the black slaves is represented as the Christianity that is inexistence of purity, complete in peace in it, and also it serves as the full representation of the nature of Christ Himself and thus carrying out the activities in unity. Unity was present when Douglass held on the good spirit of letting his fellow slaves learn how to read and even offering his time to teach them.

Slaves' Christianity does not support any corrupt deals, oppression through the act of slave holding or cruelty but instead, slaves continually believe and pray to God for their redemption. It is also against women whipping and any other form of whipping as they present a pure Christianity. Christianity is therefore a saving grace to slaves (Douglass 18).

On the other hand, Christianity represented by the slaveholders who were the whites from the south, is a hypocritical kind of Christianity. They offer prayers to God, hold Christians activities like preaching and keeping the Sabbath. They at the same time honor the Christmas period where Christians
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celebrates the birth of their Lord Jesus Christ and the New Year as a sign of appreciating God for His mercies to have them see the New Year.

One would automatically think that out of these Christian practices, they would at least show some good spirit in their deeds but instead they continue to oppress slaves. They even fail to give them enough food where they themselves have plenty to eat. According to Christian teachings, every person should actually love his or her neighbor and treat her or him in the best way possible. This is however not the case with the whites south.

The white slave holders have all through misused the Christianity institution as they take it for their advantages in gaining their selfish gains. One fails to understand why they do misrepresent Christianity. For instance, they used to give the slaves holidays during the Christmas and the New Year period.

One might assume that they did it out of good spirit so that slaves could have at least some time to rest. In fact this is however not right as the slave holders in their cunning ways, planned on how slaves could get more drunk during this period where Christianity do not advocate drunkenness. They did this through betting with the slaves so as they could compete on who was able to drink a lot of whisky and still remain in sobriety for a longer period. All what they enjoyed in, was to see slaves misuse what they had saved.

Douglass has spent much of his writing illustrating much on the main religion which is Christianity. He does this to show how much slavery and Christianity at any time can not be said to be compatible.

Christianity cannot be inexistence wherever slavery is present as slavery is an act that promotes inequalities in the human being treatment and lack of humanity. Religiosity portrayed in Christianity advocate for love and thus wherever slavery is practiced, this virtue is absent. The fact is Christianity religion is highly affected by the presence of slavery.

There is therefore a direct opposite kinds of life as what is illustrated in the Douglass writing that are lived by the both parties: slaves and their masters in terms of social life and the practical part of it, thus bringing out some differences in their spiritual lives. He therefore uses the juxtaposition of Christianity in the emphasis that there can still be a true Christianity rather than the representation of the hypocritical one (Douglass 18).

In conclusion, it is clearly evidenced that religion which is presented in the form of Christianity plays a very significant role in the entire Douglass story. It is illustrated as a means of serving individual's need, monetary aspects, and political values just for a group portion and not to the liberty of all.

All these facts do not demoralize Douglass and his colleagues who were slaves in the belief concerning Christianity. In fact, they considered searching the will and the knowledge of God through reading instead of performing other acts like drinking of whisky which would on the other hand displease God.

They wanted just to be different rather than the act of calling themselves Christians and yet they do against God's will. Christianity religion is therefore presented by the slaveholders as their reverence when defending their cruel acts where as to the slaves; it is the only source of consolation especially <https://assignbuster.com/religion-role-in-douglass-narrative-story-expository-essay/>

unto their souls. In difficult times, they believed God for His mercies and deliverance.

Douglass, Frederick. Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass. New York: Prestwick House Inc, 2005.