



# Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans (Religion in American Life)

*By Albert J. Raboteau*

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## **Canaan Land: A Religious History of African Americans (Religion in American Life)** By Albert J. Raboteau

Throughout African-American history, religion has been indelibly intertwined with the fight against intolerance and racial prejudice. Martin Luther King, Jr.- America's best-known champion of civil liberties-was a Baptist minister. Father Divine, a fiery preacher who established a large following in the 1920s and 1930s, convinced his disciples that he could cure not only disease and infirmity, but also poverty and racism.

An in-depth examination of African-American history and religion, this comprehensive and lively book provides panoramic coverage of the black religious and social experience in America. Renowned historian Albert J. Raboteau traces the subtle blending of African tribal customs with the powerful Christian establishment, the migration to cities, the growth of Islam, and the 200-year fight for freedom and identity which was so often centered around African-American churches. From the African Methodist Episcopal Church to the Nation of Islam and from the first African slaves to Louis Farrakhan, this far-reaching book chronicles the evolution of an important and influential component of our religious and historical heritage. African American Religion combines meticulously researched historical facts with a fast-paced, engaging narrative that will appeal to readers of any age.

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### **Editorial Review**

From Publishers Weekly

Working from the premise that "the story of African-American religion has often been neglected in books and courses on [both] African-American history and American religious history," Princeton religion professor Raboteau (*Slave Religion* and *A Fire in the Bones*) offers this wonderfully informative and brief introduction to African-American religious traditions. The book opens memorably with a glimpse of a 15th-century slave raid off the western coast of Africa, with Raboteau powerfully demonstrating the devastation slavery wrought upon individuals and families. He then paints with broad strokes the sensibilities of many African religions, their syncretic blending with Christianity into new traditions such as Santería and Candomblé, and the conversion of many American slaves to Christianity (particularly the Methodist and Baptist sects). He sweeps through the independent black church movement of the 19th century, chronicling how the joy of emancipation dissipated into bleak despair as African-Americans in the late 19th and early 20th centuries struggled to achieve economic and social parity. Closing chapters discuss the Great Migration and the rise of new religious movements in the North, such as Father Divine's Peace Mission Movement and the Nation of Islam. Raboteau does not neglect the conversion of many African-Americans to age-old religious traditions (there are now two million black Catholics in the United States). This well-written, concise primer, sprinkled with primary sources, covers all of the highlights and deserves to become a staple of college syllabi.

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### **Review**

"[A] wonderfully informative and brief introduction to African-American religious traditions....This well-written, concise primer, sprinkled with primary sources, covers all of the highlights and deserves to become a staple of college syllabi."--Publishers Weekly

"Read it, then tell the stories to your children. Add [this book] to your bookshelf because it documents in pictures and words the journey of blacks in America and the integral role of the church....A good read, particularly now."--New Jersey Star Ledger

"An excellent introductory text for high school through graduate school courses in American religion, African-American religion, and black theology."--National Catholic Reporter

### **About the Author**

Albert J. Raboteau is at Princeton University.

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