

## Original Paper

# The Black American Church: A Reactionary and Ideological Apparatus of Slavery

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### Abstract

*This work argues that Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, amongst a few others, were the reactionary (dialectical) exceptions to the black church, not the norm, an (ideological) institution established to interpellate and indoctrinate blacks to accept their conditions in slavery and integrate them into the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. In other words, the aforementioned were the enslaved who used Christian dogma to (negative dialectically) respond to the barbarity of slavery by violently convicting white Christian society for not living up to its values, ideas, and ideals given the treatment of African people by so-called Christians. In the latter sense it was reactionary; in the former, it was an ideological apparatus of domination and control for the institution of slavery and black integration into the bourgeois living of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The contemporary attempt to racially vindicate the black church as a sui generis revolutionary institution overflowing with Africanisms that stood against the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism is ahistorical and ideological reaped in pseudoscientific propositions stemming from postmodern and post-structural theories.*

### Keywords

*Black Church, African-Americanization, Racial Identity, Religiosity, Black Diaspora, Spiritualism, phenomenological structuralism*

### 1. Introduction

This work, using Mocombe's structurationist theory of phenomenological structuralism, argues that Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, David Walker, Henry Highland Garnet, amongst a few others, were the reactionary (dialectical) exceptions to the Black American church, not the norm, an (ideological) institution established to interpellate and indoctrinate blacks to accept their conditions in slavery. In other words, the aforementioned were the enslaved who used Christian dogma to (negative

dialectically) respond to the barbarity of slavery by violently convicting white Christian society for not living up to its values, ideas, and ideals given the treatment of African people by so-called Christians. In the latter sense it was reactionary; in the former, it was an ideological apparatus of domination and control for the institution of slavery and Black American integration into the bourgeois living of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. The contemporary attempt to racially vindicate the black church as a *sui generis* revolutionary institution overflowing with Africanisms that stood against the exploitation and oppression of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism is ahistorical and ideological reaped in pseudoscientific propositions stemming from postmodern and post-structural theories.

## 2. Background of the Problem

Since the 1960s, there have been two dominant schools of thought on understanding the origins and nature of Black American practical consciousnesses, the ideas, ideals, and values Black Americans recursively reorganize and reproduce in their material practices in the United States (US): the pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-vitality schools. The pathological-pathogenic position suggests that in its divergences from white American norms and values Black American community life and practical consciousness are nothing more than a pathological form of, and reaction to, American consciousness rather than a dual (both African and American) hegemonic opposing “identity-in-differential” (the term is Gayatri Spivak’s) to the American one (Elkins, 1959; Frazier, 1939, 1957; Genovese, 1974; Murray, 1984; Moynihan, 1965; Myrdal, 1944; Wilson, 1978, 1987; Sowell, 1975, 1981; Stamp, 1956, 1971). Afrocentric Proponents of the adaptive-vitality school suggest that the divergences are not pathologies but African “institutional transformations,” Africanisms, preserved on the American landscape (Allen, 2001; Asante, 1988, 1990; Billingsley, 1968, 1970, 1993; Blassingame, 1972; Gilroy, 1993; Gutman, 1976; Herskovits, 1958 [1941]; Holloway, 1990a; Karenga, 1993; Levine, 1977; Lewis, 1993; Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990; Nobles, 1987; Staples, 1978; Stack, 1974; West, 1993; Sudarkasa, 1980, 1981).

Contemporarily, both positions have been criticized for either their structural determinism as in the case of the pathological-pathogenic approach, or racial/cultural (essentialist) determinism as in the case of the adaptive-vitality (Karenga, 1993; Mocombe, 2008). In directly or indirectly refuting these two positions for their structural and racial/cultural determinism, contemporary post-sixties and post-segregation era black scholars (Critical Race Theorists) in the United States (US) attempt to understand black consciousnesses and communities by using post-structural and post-modern theories to either reinterpret W.E.B. Du Bois’s (1903) double consciousness construct as an epistemological (negative dialectical) mode of critical inquiry that characterizes the nature or essence of black consciousness, à la Cornel West (1993) and Paul Gilroy (1993), or, building on the social constructivist works of Frantz Fanon, offer an intersectional approach to the constitution of black consciousnesses and communities, which, methodologically using case studies and ethnographic research under the

umbrella of exploring the lived-experiences of blacks, emphasize the diverse and different levels of alienation, marginalization, and domination, class, race, gender, global location, age, and sexual identity, by which black consciousnesses and communities get constituted, a la bell hooks (1993) and Patricia Hill Collins (1990) (Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008). The former, under the umbrella of critical race theory attempts to portray Du Boisian double consciousness as negative dialectic in order to convict the West for not identifying with their ideas, ideals, and values when they continuously discriminate (individually and institutionally) against black folks who recursively organize and reproduce these ideas, ideals, and values as their practical consciousness, i.e., the modernity of the black Atlantic. In the latter position, Afropessimists take it to the extreme to suggest that blackness is an ontological paradigm of death with no political subjectivity, created by white structural violence, wherein the so-called black body is instrumentalized for intersectional (postcolonial, gay, etc.,) agendas (Wilderson III, 2017).

The so-called black church in America, the dominant ideological apparatus used to interpellate and socialize black folks to slavery and subsequently (bourgeois) American life, is caught between these latter two interpretative lenses. On the one hand, you have scholars who, using Du Boisian double consciousness as an epistemological critical mode of inquiry, see the black American church as a *sui generis* black (native) institution, constituted by its Africanism, preaching style, and songs, that became a dialectical revolutionary force of solace and freedom for blacks against slavery, segregation, discrimination, etc. (Lincoln & Mamiya, 1990; Tomlin, 2019). By this logic researchers explore how black American lived-experiences emerged from the teachings of Christianity, which was synthesized with their Africanisms (revealed by their preaching styles and songs), as promulgated by revolutionary leaders such Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Gabriel Prosser, Martin Luther King Jr., etc., to dialectically and negative dialectically convict white Christian America for not living up to their ideas, ideals, and values given their treatment of Black Folks. In this sense, the so-called Black church was a revolutionary ideological apparatus that both provided solace and the urge for freedom against American slavery, segregation, second-class citizenship, etc. This, obviously, is an absurd position to take as it negates or minimizes the fact that the Christianity, initially, introduced by Whites to Blacks was intended to interpellate and socialize them to the social structure of slavery and American (Protestant capitalist) life. Moreover, the postmodern and post-structural methodology of lived-experiences implored by many researchers of this position attempts to extrapolate the reaction of the few blacks who became literate and were able to read the bible on their own and dialectically turned it against the white Christian enslavers to the lived-experiences of members of the general community is also problematic. That is, they extrapolate from the exception to the norm as though somehow the majority of the so-called black community adopted the teachings of the few against the teachings of the White enslavers to constitute the black church as a social structural revolutionary tour de force that recursively organized and reproduced revolutionary black agents against an ideological apparatus of

domination as intended by the slavemasters that reproduced their oppression for over two hundred fifty years (Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008).

From this latter critic, you have scholars, on the other hand, who view the black church as an emerging slave institution (ideological apparatus of domination) that interpellated and indoctrinated blacks to accept their status as slaves and second-class citizenship waiting on the lord for liberation or heaven (Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008). In this latter instance, the focus is on how the institution was established as an ideological apparatus of control to curtail the agency of the so-called black community and socialize them to slavery and the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Hence, the black church was an institution of death. This latter position is also problematic as it highlights the regularity of social structural norms and rules, and denies agency, which the former position overemphasize, to the so-called black community in recursively organizing and reproducing their being-in-the-world (Mocombe, 2008).

In this work, using Mocombeian phenomenological structuralism, which seeks to fix the problems of structure and agency that plagues the two approaches, I argue that both positions represent two sides of the same coin (Mocombe, 2019). The black church, especially as established in America, was both a slave institution of death and a reactionary force that is leading to death as blacks, especially the black bourgeoisie, use and used it against White Christian America to integrate the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism of the society, which is exploitative, oppressive, and a threat to all life on earth.

### 3. Theory and Method

Mocombeian phenomenological structuralism posits that societal and agential constitution are a result of power relations, interpellation, and socialization or embourgeoisement via five systems, i.e., mode of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse, which are reified as a social structure or what Mocombe (2019, 2021a, 2021b) calls a “social class language game” by persons, power elites, who control the means and modes of production in a material resource framework. Once interpellated and embourgeoisied by these five systems, which are reified as a social structure and society (social class language game), social actors, for their ontological security, recursively organize, reproduce, and are differentiated by the rules of conduct of the social structure, which are sanctioned by the power elites who control the means and modes of production, language, ideology, ideological apparatuses, and communicative discourse in a material resource framework. Hence, societal and agential constitution are both a duality and dualism: a dualism given the reification of the social structure (social class language games) via the five systems; and a duality given the internalization of the rules of the five systems, which become the agential initiatives or praxes of social actors differentiated by the rules of conduct that are sanctioned based on the economic mode of production. Difference, or alternative social praxis, in Mocombe’s structuration theory, phenomenological structuralism, is not structural differentiation as articulated by traditional structurationists such as Bourdieu, Sahlins, Habermas, and Giddens; instead, it is a result of actions

arising from the deferment of meaning and ego-centered communication given the interaction of two other structuring structures (physiological drives of the body and brain; and phenomenal properties of subatomic particles that constitute the human subject) vis-à-vis the mental stance of the ego during the interpellation and socialization or embourgeoisement of social actors throughout their life span or cycle in the dominant social class language game or social structure, which produces alternative praxis that is exercised at the expense of the threat these practices may pose to the ontological security of social actors in the social structure or society, which is of two types (the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism or the Vodou Ethic and the spirit of communism).

Within Mocombe's phenomenological structuralism, the understanding is that the ideologies and rhetoric of pathological-pathogenic, adaptive-vitality, Afropessimism, and critical race theory should be understood within and as being constituted by the dialectical structure of a global Protestant capitalist social structure of class inequality and differentiation put in place, through bodies, mode of production, language, ideology, and ideological state and transnational apparatuses, in order to limit, direct, and integrate the meaning and discursive practices of subjective identities, which may arise as a result of the decentered subject and the indeterminacy of meaning in ego-centered communicative discourse. That is to say, the theories capture the nature of black practical consciousnesses as determined not by their own agential initiatives, but by their relations and differentiations to different modes of production in the capitalist world-system. The adaptive-vitality and pathological-pathogenic positions emerged (1619-1970) between the aporias of agricultural and industrial modes of production, respectively; and the postmodern and post-structural positions of critical race theory and afropessimism emerging (1980-2023) between the aporias of industrial and postindustrial productions.

In other words, all four theories, regarding the constitution of black practical consciousness, are ideologies of different modes of production within which black American practical consciousnesses were interpellated, constituted, embourgeoisied, and differentiated. The pathological-pathogenic and adaptive-vitality positions emerged between the aporia of a declining agricultural mode of production and an emerging industrial production. In the case of the former, adaptive-vitality position, black communalism, single female-headed households, improvisation, language, musical inclinations, and food choices witnessed in slavery were viewed as Africanisms, i.e., adaptive African behaviors to the processes and vagaries of agricultural slavery (Holloway, 1990a, 1990b). The former, pathological-pathogenic position, viewed, given the assumption that the total institution of slavery deculturalized the African, these latter adaptations as pathological-pathogenic practices adopted from poor white culture—which emerged out of agricultural slavery and were perpetuated in the urban ghettos as blacks adapted to the industrial mode of production—which stood in contradistinction to the nuclear family traditions of the white and black bourgeoisies (Frazier, 1939, 1957, 1968). Contemporarily, in post-industrial America, black American practical consciousness is associated, as highlighted by the postmodern and poststructural positions, with the glorification and commodification of black underclass practices of the ghettos, narcissism, and improvisation highlighted by their musical

styles, and identity politics as it stands against the nuclear and bourgeois rhetoric of the pathological-pathogenic position emerging out of the industrialism of the 1960s (Wilson, 1978, 1987; Reed, 1997; Mocombe, 2008).

In other words, the majority of black wealth in America, contemporarily, is contingent upon rent with no true productivity value, just consumptive value. White rentier oligarchs ascertain wealth via finance, insurance, and real estate, which they in turn invest in sports and other entertainment industries where black millionaires, “the my niggas,” become millionaires and billionaires who drive the consumptive taste of the black poor through the commodification and celebration of their underclass hip-hop, gender, sexual, athletic, and youthful identities, which emerged from their integration in the social structure of postindustrial capitalism, which both transmogrified and constituted their communities, families, and identities as the by-product of intersectional (age, sex, sexual orientation, class, and race) standpoints within capitalist relations of production as opposed to nuclear family ideologies of the pathological-pathogenic position.

In the agricultural, and the beginning of the industrial, age, between 1880-1960, married households, traditional nuclear families raising children, dominated the black American family structure against the adaptive-vitality of the agricultural mode of production (1619-1880s). Post the 1960s, and the advent of deindustrialization, criminalization, mass incarceration, and post-industrialization of American inner-cities, the out-of-wedlock birth rate began emerging as the dominant black family structural form, which was 25% among black people (Moynihan, 1965). Post the Moynihan report, which examined the link between black poverty and family structure, that number rose to 70% as of 2018. The result in postindustrial American capitalism where identity politics and the glorification of the self and its standpoints are commodified by finance capital for capital accumulation by the white power elites, rentier oligarchs, the celebration of single-female headed households and same-sex couple family structures would emerge, via the ideology of identity politics, as the dominant family forms in black America post the 1960s. Given the criminalization, mass incarceration of black males, and their absence in the homes as a result of legislation associated with the processes of deindustrialization, postindustrial inner-cities would be dominated by black single-female headed households, and gay male and female family structures (the latter one can surmise emerging from homosexual behaviors, which occurred in prison and post-incarceration amongst black males; and the rise of lesbianism due to the lack of men in the communities). Amidst the 70% single-female headed households, as of 2010, 32.9% of children in the US were raised by same-sex black male couples compared to 6.2% raised by white male same-sex couples; 46.7% were raised by black female same-sex couples compared to 23.1% for white female same-sex couples; and as of 2015, 24% of all black men married outside of their race compared with 12% of black female newlyweds, which is on the rise (Movement Advancement Project, Family Equality Council and Center for American Progress, 2012). Hence, blackness, due to its social relations and differentiations within industrialization and post-industrialization, lacked any subjectivity as posited by afropessimists; instead, it (their practical consciousnesses that emerged from their social relations and

differentiations vis-à-vis the industrial and post-industrial modes of production) was instrumentalized for neoliberal identity politics and intersectional jargon, becoming a model community of, and for, the latter (intersectional) by negative dialectically convicting Western society for its (individual and institutional) discriminatory affects against the serial, reified, and commodified identities utilized by finance capital for capital accumulation. This latter position represents the theorization of critical race theory, which highlights the continual effects of institutional racism, sexism, transgenderism, etc., on preventing black folks from achieving equality of opportunity, recognition, and distribution with their White counterparts.

#### 4. Discussion and Conclusion

Contemporary theorists of the black church seek to extrapolate the contemporary emphasis on intersectionality and lived-experiences of blacks, which dominate today's theoretical framework, back to their initial interpellation and embourgeoisement in the American social structure. The latter is done in order to account for their (blacks') agential initiatives, as revealed by the reactionary response of those who encountered Christianity due to their ability to read, against the institution of slavery, which introduced them to a social structural form of Christianity intent to serve as an ideological apparatus of interpellation, domination, differentiation, and embourgeoisement, in order to reproduce blacks as slaves and agents of the Protestant Ethic and the spirit of capitalism. Mocombeian phenomenological structuralism, which attempts to account for the reactionary agency of the former with the structural intent of the latter posits that both positions inadequately account for how social structure is organized (as a dualism) and how praxis emerges (the duality of social structure). Black practical consciousnesses and their ideological apparatuses, such as the black church, in America are a duality of the white American social structure, not an alternative dualism (constituted around the five systems, i.e., mode of production, language, etc.) based on black Africanism and revolutionary spirit, against the latter, which produces and reproduces agents with a sui generis agential initiative (duality). In a word, their structuring structures became a simulacra of white ones.

The Africans, ninety percent of whom could not read, as an introduced marginalized unit of the Protestant Ethic and spirit of capitalism social structure of slavery were "seasoned" in doctrines, slave codes, the Protestant churches (initially by white ministers, later on by native-born slaves), slavery, individual civil rights and liberties, etc. Unlike their literate non-protestant and protestant white counterparts, who could work hard and eventually—if predestined—become masters or what amounted to the same thing institutional regulators, as a structurally differentiated group the Africans had to accept their prescribed lowly conditions (slaves and slavery), given the fact that their physical difference, perpetual "otherness," in relation to white bourgeois (Patriarchal) Protestantism did not allow for their predestination or equality.

Thus their relationship with the power elites operated along a master/slave relationship, where the rich, white, Protestant males (masters) worked and re-worked the ideas and practices of the protestant ethic on the one hand, and their terms and representations for the Africans' forms (soul-less, blacks, savages

and barbarous, less intelligent and human than their white counterparts, ungodly, promiscuous, etc.) of being in the world, which they (rich, white, Protestant, heterosexual males) used to delimit their own form (godly, pious, obedient, pure, civilized, diligent, intelligent, etc.) of being in the world, on the other to reproduce the social relations of production, slavery.

Accordingly then, whereas it may have been the case that the Africans initially transported into this mechanical solidarity in the seventeenth and early part of the eighteenth centuries were different and heterogeneous, “others” with distinct practical consciousnesses from the continent, as a dominated deployable unit of the white protestant economic social relations of American society they became a homogeneous group, blacks (later differentially stratified along class lines and their adaptive responses to enslavement), prepared for one facet of life in the American social structure: “systematic labor” (Blassingame, 1972, pg. 3) conditioned by the obedient work ethic of Protestantism. In other words, Africans came from all over Africa, and embodied different structurally determined subjective forms (agential dualities) of being-in-the-world, which ranged from, rigid patriarchy, traditional Islamic practices, to matrilineal polygamous tribalism; by the nineteenth-century (1808), which marks the discontinuation of the African slave trade to the United States, these “other” forms of being-in-the-world were discriminated against and marginalized, within the American social structure, by native-born classified blacks, “the best of the house servants, mulattoes, artisans, and the educated free Negro from the North,” what would become the black bourgeoisie, who due to their freedom and privileges served as a reference group for the larger black community, and whites alike, who embodied and recursively organized and reproduced the Protestant cultural conditions of the society in their material practice.

So it is not that “in the process of acculturation the slaves made European forms serve African functions” (Blassingame, 1972, pg. 17), as many of the representatives of the adaptive-vitality school contends; on the contrary, the majority of slaves had to choose, for their ontological security within the American social structure, between the European forms prescribed by power (whites and the best of the house servants, mulattoes, artisans, and the educated free Negro from the North) or the continual practice of their ontologically insecure “other” (African) forms of being in the world or any “other” fully visible, albeit discriminated against, “alternatives,” which delimited the social structure.

This does not mean that nothing of Africa survived slavery because of the African’s need to forsake African forms in order to move from being “other” in the new Protestant world setting. On the contrary, the suggestion is that different alternative categorical boundaries (the reactions of Vesey, Turner, Prosser, etc.) existed in the African community. However, it was the “practical consciousness” of “the best of the house servants, mulattoes, artisans, and the educated free Negro from the North,” which to a large extent rejected these African forms in order to be recognized by their white masters, that would come to represent and define black identity as these blacks became institutional regulators and the bearers of ideological and linguistic domination within the Protestant “class racism” of the dominant society against the reactionary forms of literate blacks, like Vesey, Turner, etc., who interpreted



Christianity to convict whites for not living up to its ideals, ideas, and values, which propelled blacks to fight against their enslavement (Winant, 2001).

So, the structural logic here is that in the course of the development of American society, white, Protestant, males developed a series of laws and judicial rulings, “enframed” (Heidegger’s term) by the cultural ideology of their protestant ethic, to define, interpellate, and represent the African (black cursed son of Ham, ungodly, licentious, emotional, irrational, uncivilized and barbaric, soul-less, etc.) situation in relation to that of whites’ (white, godly, pious, obedient, pure, civilized, diligent, rational, etc.) in order to morally justify (given the internal contradiction between slavery and Christian brotherhood, human rights, etc.) and reproduce the integrative economic (Protestant) social relations of agricultural production (slavery) proffered by them as the power elites of the society. As the historian Vincent D. Harding (1981) highlights,

Beginning in Virginia at the end of the 1630s, laws establishing lifelong [(*durante vita*)] African slavery were instituted. They were followed by laws prohibiting black-white intermarriage, laws against the ownership of property by Africans, laws denying blacks all basic political rights (limited as they were among whites at the time). In addition, there were laws against the education of Africans, laws against the assembling of Africans, laws against the ownership of weapons by Africans, laws perpetuating the slavery of their parents to African children, laws forbidding Africans to raise their hands against whites even in self-defense.

Then, besides setting up legal barriers against the entry of black people as self-determining participants into the developing American society, the laws struck another cruel blow of a different kind: they outlawed many rituals connected with African religious practices [(which were deemed heathenistic, lewd, licentious, etc.)], including dancing and the use of the drums. In many places they also banned African languages. Thus they attempted to shut black people out from both cultures, to make them wholly dependent neuters.

Finally, because the religious and legal systems were so closely intertwined, everywhere in the colonies a crucial legislative decision declared that the Africans’ conversion to Christianity [(the protestant type)] did not affect their enslavement.... Again, Virginia led the way: in 1667 its Assembly passed an act declaring that “the conferring of baptism doth not alter the condition of the person as to his bondage or freedom.” Such laws freed many whites to do their Christian duty of evangelization and to reap the profit and the social standing of slave ownership at the same time (pg. 27).

Africans, who began arriving on the North American mainland “over more than a century preceding the War of Independence” (Gutman, 1976, pg. 328), did not initially subscribe to this racial class ideological foundation, for they resisted enslavement and its institutionalization through ship mutinies prior to their arrival to the “New World;” guerilla wars; rebellions, the New York City Revolt in 1712, the Stono, South Carolina revolt in 1739, Gabriel Prosser revolt in 1800, Denmark Vesey conspiracy in 1822, the Nat Turner revolt in 1831, etc.—over 250 revolts are recorded in the US; suicide and

infanticide; flights; and sabotage, i.e., breaking tools and destroying crops, shamming illness or ignorance, taking property, spontaneous, and planned strikes, work slow-downs, self-mutilation, arson, attacks on whites and poisoning of slaveholders and their families (Karenga, 1993; Bennett, 1982; Harding, 1981; Blassingame, 1972; Gutman, 1976; Aptheker, 1964; Franklin & Moss, 2000). These efforts, however, proved to be counter-productive to resisting subjugation, as they were incorporated by the white masters to constitute their social structure as evidence of the African's barbaric or savage disposition, the image of the African as unruly, rebellious, irrational, stupid, prone to thievery, destructive, sophomoric, licentious, and in turn used, relationally, to demonstrate to the slaves—during the “seasoning” process where the African learned Protestantism and its systematic work ethic—what was unacceptable behavior of a barbaric, black slave without religion.

As the historian John Blassingame (1972) points out in *The Slave Community*, “white ministers taught the slaves that they did not deserve freedom, that it was God's will that they were enslaved, that the devil was creating those desires for liberty in their breasts, and that runaways would be expelled from the church. Then followed the slave beatitudes: blessed are the patient, blessed are the faithful, blessed are the cheerful, blessed are the submissive, blessed are the hardworking, and above all, blessed are the obedient” (Blassingame, 1972, pgs., 62-63). (It is no surprise that the seven major historic black denominations—the African Methodist Episcopal (A.M.E.) Church; the African Methodist Episcopal Zion (A.M.E.Z.) Church; the Christian Methodist Episcopal (C.M.E.) Church; the National Baptist Convention, U.S.A., Incorporated (NBC); the National Baptist Convention of America, Unincorporated (NBCA); the Progressive National Baptist Convention (PNBC); and the Church of God in Christ (COGIC)—that account for more than 80 percent of black religious affiliation in the United States are of the Baptist, Methodist, and Pentecostal Protestant variety. These Protestant churches with their high emotionalism, fervor, enthusiasm, and excitement, their revivalism, their excesses of sinning and high-voltage confessing (Bell, 1960, pg. 103), has provided—for an illiterate mass prevented for a long time, on account of their immorality, lasciviousness, enslavement, and heathenism, from partaking in the “thisworldly” affairs of the Protestant American social structure, derived from the intellectualism of traditional Protestantism—the means for access, via what is required for “otherworldly” existence, into the “thisworldly” affairs of the social structure. In other words, for blacks, the Christianity of Methodism and Baptism served as a means to the Protestant ethic and the spirit of capitalism, the structuring structure, culture, that is American society. That is to say, the “Christianity that was spread among slaves during the First and Second Awakenings was an evangelical Christianity that stressed personal conversion through a deep regenerating experience, being born again. The spiritual journey began with an acknowledgement of personal sinfulness and unworthiness and ended in an emotional experience of salvation by God through the Holy Spirit. The rebirth meant a change, a fundamental reorientation in the approach to life” (Lincoln and Mamiya, 1990, pg. 6)—becoming moral agents of the Protestant ethic in “this world” in order to have access to the “other world.”).

During the “seasoning” process, where the newly arrived Africans were forcefully taught, by the slave master, over-seers or native-born slaves, the language, religion, and work ethic or purposive-rationality of the American social structure, the majority of the early slaves, Stanley Elkins’s Sambo, who worked intimately with their white masters, for their ontological security, incorporated these beliefs and practices, which they recursively organized and reproduced in their own material practices, and they became the structural terms, i.e., “good moral character, economic accumulation, temperance, industry, thrift, and learning,” by which the larger slave community, which either maintained some element of their Africanisms in their material practices or developed a pathological-pathogenic form of the structural terms of the society given their relative isolation, was assessed (Elkins, 1959; Frazier, 1939, 1957; Stampp, 1956; Genovese, 1974).

In other words, with their very survival dependent upon following rules of conduct, which were sanctioned, many Africans acculturated or accommodated to the institution of slavery and incorporated the Protestant ethos (its work ethic, family organization, “white standards of morality,” godliness, obedience, rationalism, etc.) into their way of being-in-the-world (Elkins, 1959; Frazier, 1939, 1957; Stampp, 1956; Genovese, 1974), which they and the dominant whites, as bearers of ideological domination, used to assess and determine the proper rules of conduct for the larger slave community. Those who did not accommodate were for the most part killed or brutally tortured until they did so. That is to say, as a deployable unit, i.e. Black slaves, of the social structure, the social organization of family and cultural life in the majority of the African slave quarters became based on the ethical rules of the Protestant ethic against fully visible African ways of being-in-the-world, as demonstrated in the practices of newly arrived Africans or those who, through the constitution of alternative meanings and behaviors, either rejected the purposive-rationality of the American social structure, or sought to exercise them in a national position of their own. This latter group of blacks included maroon communities of runaway slaves who attempted to exercise their African agential moments in the new world, and nationalist and conservative leading literate blacks such as Booker T. Washington, David Walker, Gabriel Prosser, Denmark Vesey, Nat Turner, Martin Delany, Henry Highland Garnet, etc., who, although they embodied the Protestantism of the social structure, sought (reactionarily) not integration, like the majority of their bourgeois counterparts, but separation, black nationalism, and or to convict the larger white Protestant society for not living up to their ideas, ideals, and values (Meier, 1963, 1966; Stuckey, 1987).

Consequently, the agential moments of those blacks who failed to exercise the purposive-rationality of the society, or rejected it in order to exercise them in a national position of their own or convict white Protestants for not living up to their ideas, ideals, values, were discriminated against and marginalized by not only the slave owners and white overseers, but also those native-born acculturated liberal blacks, “the best of the house servants, mulattoes, artisans, and the educated free Negro from the North,” who recursively organized and reproduced the purposive-rationality of the social structure, “the standard of good society,” i.e., “temperance, industry, thrift, and learning...,” in their own material practices, for the

sole purpose of integration in order to obtain equality of opportunity, distribution, and recognition in the society (Meier & Rudwick, 1966 [1976], pg. 127).

What developed from all this was a class-color-caste system, i.e., a “caste in class,” superordinate whites and subordinate blacks, perpetually subordinate, each dominated by the “predestined” class: blacks in relation to whites, in other words, emerged in the social structure of the “spirit of capitalism” as a caste (a racial class-in-itself as a result of “racial” structural differentiation) defined by their inherent fitness for slave labor to produce economic gain for their white masters, to a “caste in class” defined in relation to whites by those good obedient slaves (Stanley Elkins’ Sambo, resulting from “class” structural differentiation), who embodied the protestant work ethic of the society for the sole purpose of integration or proving their predestination and those who did not because of their lack of “class” or need for separation.

This racial class social system became “reinforced” by the sociopolitical, religious, economic “legal system” (slavery and Jim Crow Segregation) in which the majority of the Africans followed the rules of conduct which were sanctioned by the master for the slave and himself (Drake, 1965, pg. 3). The majority of the slaves, given their “seasoning” in the American Protestant solidarity as a structurally differentiated racial class-in-itself, black slaves, recursively organized and reproduced the rules of their masters, against the reproduced negative images of themselves by these same masters, to demonstrate their “predestination,” or a sense of self-worth within the social structure among themselves: jumping over the broomstick to legalize marriages, an old English practice commonly used instead of church weddings, which were illegal for slaves; establishing traditional patriarchal nuclear families based on monogamy; establishing, as a result of segregation, Masonic lodges, churches, and mutual aid societies patterned after their white counterparts; demonstrating diligence in their work; instilling in their children a sense of Christian values; black hymns; penning petitions for their liberation—the idea “that God granted temporal freedom, which man, without God’s consent, had stolen away” (Blassingame, 1972, pg. 63),—based on reason and revelation as their white masters did against England; and a developing class distinction (also based on color, lighter blacks v. darker ones) between house, “mixed-bloods,” Negroes and field slaves, the former, given their close ties to the slave owner and quasi-freedom, better off than the latter (Franklin, 1957; Karenga, 1993; Bennett, 1982; Harding, 1981; Blassingame, 1972; Gutman, 1976; Aptheker, 1964; Franklin & Moss, 2000).

This acculturation for survival in essence eventually turned African consciousness among a *few* blacks, “favored” slaves, house slaves, artisans, “mixed-bloods,” free colored population, who together numbered about 500, 000 at the outbreak of the Civil War, into an American, Protestant type. A practical consciousness amongst many blacks defined by their struggle for freedom, to exercise the purposive-rationality of the social structure and obtain class and status “based upon possession of money, education, and family background as reflected in distinctive styles of behavior” (Drake, 1965, pg. 3), against the claim of “their inherent fitness for slavery and backwardness” which delimited the social structure and barred them from achieving economic gain and recognition. Thus, the so-called black

American church became divided between the latter, and those reacting to the latter to (dialectically and negative dialectically) convict the larger society for not living up to its Christian ideas, ideals, and values. This, contemporary push, to define and constitute the black American church based on its Africanisms and the lived-experiences of the black majority stemming from the purposive-rationality of its reactionary leaders such as Vesey, Turner, King, etc., is a theoretical misrepresentation and misreading of how social structure is constituted and praxis is determined based on the phenomenology of post-modern and post-structural theorizing about lived-experience at the expense of social structure. Moreover, it is an attempt by the power elites of the contemporary black bourgeoisie to establish the black American church as one of the dominant ideological apparatuses, which includes black colleges, fraternities, sororities, and masonic lodges, for black interpellation and embourgeoisement into American postindustrial life with its emphasis on personal lived-experience for the glorification of the self, identity politics, and diversified consumerism.

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