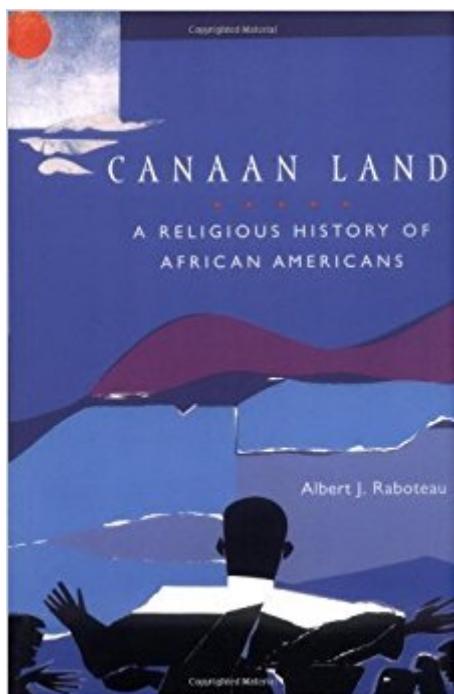


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Canaan Land: A Religious History Of African Americans (Religion In American Life)



Synopsis

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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Customer Reviews

In seven brief chapters, "Canaan Land" provides a concise and accessible summary of the history of African American religion and its significance in the struggle for black freedom since the colonial period. Designed as an undergraduate textbook, it provides a synopsis of existing research on black religion, rather than new scholarly interpretations. Throughout the book, Raboteau maintains that religion sustained African American communities during the centuries of oppression by providing social networks, avenues for political organizing, and a focus for the quest for freedom. He asserts that in the course of the American experience diverse religious traditions, including Christianity, Caribbean religious expressions, and African practices, were forged into a distinctive African American religious identity. The book offers a chronological overview of the development of black religion. It spells out how 18th-century revivalism led to the conversion of slaves in the colonies and, in conjunction with the American revolution, called into question the legitimacy of slavery. It traces the emergence of black churches, takes a closer look at black spirituality, and discusses the process of the "invisible institution" taking on visible form in the post-bellum South. Raboteau rejects the argument that Christianity distracted from the causes of oppression. He argues that religion urged slaves to act upon their own consciences and thus provided a sense of their inner freedom. Black churches, he maintains, were also crucial in managing the transition from country to city at the turn of the century. However, as established churches became more impersonal and bureaucratic, they encountered increasing competition from Pentecostalism and the holiness movement.

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