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978-0-521-19853-0 - African American Religions, 1500–2000: Colonialism, Democracy,
and Freedom

Sylvester A. Johnson

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African American Religions, 1500–2000

This book provides a narrative historical, postcolonial account of African American religions. It examines the intersection of Black religion and colonialism over several centuries to explain the relationship between empire and democratic freedom. Rather than treating freedom and its others (colonialism, slavery, and racism) as opposites, Sylvester A. Johnson interprets multiple periods of Black religious history to discern how Atlantic empires (particularly that of the United States) simultaneously enabled the emergence of particular forms of religious experience and freedom movements as well as disturbing patterns of violent domination. Johnson explains theories of matter and spirit that shaped early indigenous religious movements in Africa, Black political religion responding to the American racial state, the creation of Liberia, and FBI repression of Black religious movements in the twentieth century. By combining religious studies methods with analysis of empire, Johnson explains the seeming contradictions that have shaped Black religions over several centuries.

Sylvester A. Johnson is Associate Professor of African American Studies and Religious Studies at Northwestern University. He is a founding coeditor of the *Journal of Africana Religions*, the only English-language peer-reviewed journal devoted to publishing research on religions in Africa and throughout the Black diaspora.

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SYLVESTER A. JOHNSON

Northwestern University



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32 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10013-2473, USA

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www.cambridge.org

Information on this title: www.cambridge.org/9780521157001

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First published 2015

Printed in the United States of America

A catalog record for this publication is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data

Johnson, Sylvester A., 1972– author.

African American religions, 1500–2000 : colonialism, democracy, and freedom /
Sylvester A. Johnson, Northwestern University.

pages cm

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 978-0-521-19853-0 (hardback) – ISBN 978-0-521-15700-1 (pbk.)

1. African Americans – Religion – History. 2. United States – Church
history. I. Title.

BL625.2.J64 2015

200.89'96073–dc23 2015009567

ISBN 978-0-521-19853-0 Hardback

ISBN 978-0-521-15700-1 Paperback

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Acknowledgments

One of the rewards of writing a book is the profound debt of gratitude that accrues during the process. I will begin by thanking Eric Crahan, under whose editorship this project began. Eric saw the potential of this book from the very start. Thanks for your vision, Eric. I also hold tremendous gratitude for Debbie Gershenowitz, who guided this project to completion. Dana Bricken was especially helpful in directing me through the preparation and production process.

My colleagues in the Department of Religious Studies at Indiana University–Bloomington kindly devoted one of our faculty colloquia to this book project at an early stage and provided generative feedback and encouragement. The College of Arts and Sciences at IU also provided me a generous research leave that was essential to enabling this project's conceptualization and early research. Aaron Stalnaker, David Haberman, “Bert” Harrill, Candy Gunther Brown, Kevin Jaques, David Brakke, Steven Weitzman, Constance Furey, Richard Miller, Sarah Imhoff, Michael Ing, Shaul Magid, Patrick Michelson, Richard Nance, Stephen Selka, Lisa Sideris, and Rebecca Manring were not just conversation partners but also gracious colleagues whose support of my intellectual work has inspired much gratitude. The faculty in the Department of African American and African Diaspora Studies at IU also helped to nurture this project, inviting me to present some of the early research at a brown-bag discussion. Valerie Grim, Iris Rosa, Frederick McElroy, and Micol Seigel are among those who posed productive questions and offered helpful suggestions as this project began.

My move to Northwestern University provided a continuing community of intellectual support. The faculty members in the Department

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of African American Studies have helped me to sharpen my intellectual grasp of fairly difficult concepts and have suggested resources that have proved invaluable to my work. In fact, the book would have taken a different shape were it not for the rich feedback, constructive challenges, and unselfish support from Sherwin Bryant, Richard Iton, Darlene Clark Hine, Nitasha Sharma, Martha Biondi, Celeste-Watkins Hayes, Michelle Wright, Alex Weheliye, Mary Pattillo, Dwight McBride, Tracy Vaughn, and Sandra Richards. Barnor Hesse has been especially helpful in challenging me to engage with a more deliberate account of race, and our numerous conversations have been richly rewarding. The Department of Religious Studies has also generated a stimulating atmosphere through faculty and graduate student colloquia, spurring my understanding of many important themes that have benefited this study. Robert Orsi has been especially generous in pointing me to essential reading and providing feedback about the problems of materiality in religion. My colleagues in the “Pacific Century” reading group – Nitasha Sharma, Simeon Man, Kathleen Belew, Jinah Kim, Beth Lew-Williams, Camilla Fojas, and Daniel Immerwahr – provided wonderfully astute feedback on Chapter 4 of the book. The Weinberg College of Arts and Sciences also kindly arranged a research leave early after my arrival that allowed me to devote uninterrupted time to finishing this book manuscript. No less important has been the feedback I have received from graduate students in doctoral seminars in African American Studies and Religious Studies. The vigorous discussions of freedom, empire, and religion in these exchanges remained present with me as I worked through various sections of the book.

I have reached out to many trusted colleagues who have proved immensely resourceful. Edward E. Curtis IV, with whom I coedit the *Journal of Africana Religions*, has been faithfully encouraging and deserves special credit for planting the seeds of this book. Edward invited me to contribute to a volume he was editing several years ago, and that collaboration marked the beginnings of this book project. Dianne Stewart has been an intellectual partner for many years and provided helpful suggestions for making this a better book. The Young Scholars of American Religion program, run by the Center for the Study of Religion and American Culture at Indiana University–Purdue University in Indianapolis, was a special catalyst in helping me to concretize key aspects of this project. Equally important has been the network of colleagues from that group who have remained essential interlocutors. Tracy Leavelle, especially, has inspired me to engage more directly with the formation of the United States as an empire. The collaborators in the

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“Religion and US Empire” working group have also been generous and gracious in suggesting resources to prod my thinking about the book project.

Among the countless others who contributed to this book’s completion is Mina Chung of the University of Manitoba, who allowed us to stay in her home in Winnipeg, Manitoba, during a research leave. It was an intensely rewarding experience of productivity and respite. Jeffrey Wheatley’s astute research skills and attention to detail were essential to preparing the manuscript for production. His reliability is exceeded only by his brilliance. And Jeremy Rehwaldt embodies an unrelenting standard of excellence and meticulous attention to the intellectual and mechanical aspects of writing. His assistance with the book was immensely valuable.

Along the way, I have benefited from multiple opportunities to present sections of the project to various audiences. I am especially grateful to the faculty and students of Hanover College, Drake University, Stanford University, Princeton University, and the University of Chicago Divinity School. John Corrigan, Amanda Porterfield, and the American religions PhD students at Florida State University were especially kind to devote one of their colloquium meetings to discussing Chapter 3. The feedback and constructive challenges I received in these venues have continued to inform my thinking.

I continue to be enriched by the mentorship and intellectual shaping of James H. Cone, who supervised my graduate training with intellectual generosity and superb attention, and Ronald Liburd, whose profound guidance and endlessly stimulating intellection sparked and nurtured my undergraduate study of the humanities. Stephen Angell was also a kind mentor in my undergraduate years and continues to be a supportive intellectual presence.

My family has been a special source of encouragement and support. In countless ways, my parents Jean and S.L. Johnson inspired my confidence, gifted me with joyfulness, and repeatedly affirmed my ambitions. Neither lived to see this book come to fruition, but with every breath I remember how I am infused with and shaped by them. My sisters frequently checked in to ask how the manuscript was progressing and express their affirmation. Our older daughter Ayanna grew into a young woman during the writing of this book. Her generous spirit and loving affirmations have reminded me of how rewarding it is to be a parent. Our younger daughter Rainah was born the same year the project started. I will always smile as I remember the many weeks she spent dancing around me and giving me hugs while I was on leave

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completing the final chapters. Finally, my wife Heather Nicholson has been a true partner in life. It was Heather who invited my father to live with us when his health began to fail. As a result, in the last year of his life my father filled our home with lasting memories of warmth, laughter, and love. Beyond that, I have talked through literally every section of the book manuscript with Heather, and she has listened with unfailing affirmation, critical interest, and enthusiastic challenge. Her intellectual brilliance has informed this work in many ways, especially through her feedback on multiple chapter drafts. This proved essential to my formulating a clearer conception of the book. Most of all, Heather's fearless, steadfast love and friendship have encouraged me to inhabit my ideas unabashedly and to feel supported in the most profound way. Heather, you will always command my deepest thanks.