Religion and Minority Status
notes from *The Scientific Study of Religion* by Milton Yinger
and from other sources, quotations not always indicated, this document is not for quotation

Introduction

New issues are injected into the relations between religion and social class when minority ethnic status is included. No sharp line can be drawn between lower-class sects and minority sects. Lower-class individuals are culturally different from higher-class individuals, not just economically different. However, race is important because of the special meaning attached to it as a status factor in many settings.

In American, where minority-majority relations are not simply class relations, race is an important aspect of the stratification system. Majority-minority stratification systems are characterized by ambivalence at both societal and individual levels.

Although status placement is determined by descent, and endogamy is the usual rule, major institutions of society no longer fully support the rigid assignment of persons to low status. For example, the educational system, the political system, and the law substantially, though not fully, oppose racism. Opportunities are partially open to minority races on the basis of individual criteria.

Although minority-group individuals carry a load of self-doubt and even of self-hatred that stems from their historical and continuing mistreatment, they also challenge the justice and validity of their low status. They regard themselves as the objects of collective discrimination. They see themselves as relatively deprived in a situation that has begun to offer them support for that perception from some majority-group members and from institutional norms.

These ambivalences distinguish, to some extent, the minority situation from that of either a lower caste or a lower class. Members of a minority group are not simply persons in an underprivileged status. They are *categorically* assigned to that status on the basis of prejudice by the dominant group. Therefore, there is a rigid quality about their status and a sense of belonging to their group that does not characterize lower class membership where race is not involved.

Underprivileged persons adopt acceptance, avoidance, or aggressive strategies in dealing with the world around them. Nowhere are these different strategies more apparent than in their various religious expressions. Some religions encourage minority-group members to accept their situation passively. Other religions encourage them to withdraw and emphasize other-worldly values. Such religious expressions are often not, strictly speaking, sects. Although their modes of worship and belief may differ widely from the religion of the middle and upper-classes, they do not represent alienation from society so much as their lack of status in society. Southern African-Americans in the nineteenth century were part of a Protestant ecclesia, in a relationship to the dominant church that was quite similar to that of the mestizo peasantry to the Catholic Church in Latin America.

The terminology used so far in this discussion is not subtle enough for the full range of facts. There can be a substantial amount of disguised and deflected antagonism to the dominant order in beliefs and practices that seem indifferent to that order, what might be called an incipient sect. These tendencies are not organizationally visible until a wider view of the world is opened up for the members of the minority group. Their hopes are stirred and they begin to see the society around them as responsible for their pain and sorrow. Some sects implicitly criticize but do not explicitly attack society. They emphasize withdrawal and the importance of "living right" in pure religious communion, avoiding an evil society that they cannot change. Other sects protest directly, on religious grounds, against the society that treats them so badly.

The precise nature of a minority sect depends upon:

1. The degree of hope that the group feels about the chances for improving their status. Up to a point, the more hopeful, the more likely the sect is to be aggressive. The more overwhelming the power of the dominant group seems, the greater the likelihood that avoidance or acceptance themes will be used. The degree of hopefulness is related somewhat to the facts of power distribution, and somewhat to cultural traditions. Sometimes traditions skew hope unrealistically in a positive direction, as was the case with some of the American Indian religious movements. Excessive optimism usually does not last long, however. Excessive resignation is found in secular movements that try to take advantages of opportunities for improvement.

2. The nature of religious and cultural traditions of a group influence sects' themes. A Hindu sect, for example, is far less likely to challenge society than a Christian sect. The doctrines of karma and reincarnation in Hinduism make direct attacks on society difficult. Christianity, however, contains the potential for aggressive themes, even though they are usually curtailed by other factors.

3. The existence of secular movements affects, and is affected by religious movements. Sometimes an aggressive secular movement drains off potential converts who might otherwise be drawn to aggressive sects, or this can work the other way around. Occasionally, secular and religious movements join together.

4. The degree of acculturation to the values of the dominant society also influences the nature of the religious life minority groups. The more a group embraces the society's dominant values, the more the group wants to share in the goals of the dominant society. This reduces the likelihood that acceptance or avoidance themes will be successful as sectarian appeals. When people want what the rest of society has, they are more likely to seek what they want aggressively. For example, women have long been short-changed in the occupational status system, but as long as they didn't want the rewards of men's occupations, they were not aggressive. Now many women want what men get out of society. Women's liberation reflects this change in women's values.

George Simpson found that in Jamaica, underprivileged individuals who were least acculturated to European values were the most likely to join escapist cults, while the more acculturated individuals were attracted to movements that expressed aggressive themes. Even the most aggressive cults,

however, had escapist elements, reflecting their relative powerlessness. Interestingly, the escapism of the Ras Tafari cult was a "this-worldly escapism," a back-to-Africa movement that represented an unwillingness to give up the hope of success in this world and yet made a very pessimistic appraisal of the changes of improvement of its members' status in Jamaica.[1] This may be a kind of halfway station between projecting hopes into heaven and into reforming one's own society. Among some African-Americans, there has perhaps been a similar trend reflecting alternative hopes, from Marcus Garvey's "Back-to-Africa" movement to the Black Muslims' hope for control of a separate American region to Black Power advocacy of control of African-American communities wherever they are.

The full range of religious responses can be seen among African-Americans. Those who accepted their low status in the rural South adopted religion that helped them adjust to their hopeless situation. Those with some hope for change adopted religion and secular movements varying from protest to radical revolutionary themes.

The situation of the American Indian has been quite different. Indian culture has been attacked by white society. The religious protests of American Indians have been aimed at preserving their own traditional culture in the face of a white social structure and culture that has worked at eliminating Indian culture for generations. The Indians have used religion, in part, to resist absorption into white society, whereas most African-Americans have wanted to be treated as full and equal Americans. With the appearance of the Black Power movement, this has been less true than before. Since then, integrationist and separatist tendencies have existed side-by-side among African-Americans.

5. The influence of leaders must also be taken into account. Leaders can not advocate just any strategy they want, as many will not be accepted by their followers. However, within limits, leaders influence the themes of sectarian movements.

6. The character system (typical personality characteristics) of followers also must be considered. Different individuals confronted by similar situations may make different adjustments to the situations. Some, because of early socialization, may be burdened by self-doubt, guilt, and anxiety. Given this character structure, the tragedies and frustrations of life will strike one with special poignancy. Such people are susceptible to what William James called religion of the twice-born. Other individuals who grew up in circumstances that braced them for hardship, giving them a higher tolerance for tragedy and guilt, will be drawn to more optimistic religion or join a hopeful secular movement.

From the above remarks, we can see that religion among minorities, as among others, is the result of the interplay of many forces. This complicates the task of analysis, but any attempt to understand religion as a consequence of one or two factors alone will be inadequate. The variables we have been discussing may be summarized in the following proposition:

> *The more a minority group does share and wants to share in the dominant culture of a society, the greater its power, the stronger its hope, the more its religious tradition encourages an emphasis on the value of life in this world, the more aggressive its leadership, the more the tendencies of the members encourage them to confront life directly, rather than inventing symbolic solutions — when these circumstances apply, the farther the religious response to the group's status will move down the road of acceptance Æ avoidance Æ aggression, and the more it will develop secular themes to supplement or to replace the religious sectarian movements.*[2]

Religious Protest & Revitalization Among Minorities

Minority protest movements always contain elements of cultural renewal and cultural distinctiveness. Religious movements emphasize the very difference the majority group has used to downgrade the minority. However, the difference is transposed from a mark of inferiority to one of equality or superiority. Lower-class movements also affirm that the last shall be first, but the interpretation is more individualistic than the interpretation of status signs among minorities. Lower-class movements emphasize their members' moral superiority. Minority movements emphasize cultural distinctiveness and superiority.

One of the functions of protest movements is to allow some absorption of the dominant culture while making their opposition to deprived status clear. An old order, filled with injustice, is breaking down. New hopes are aroused, but obstacles are made even more visible. Minority members become even more aware of their common fate. Some of them see a need for unifying themes. This need is heightened by personal demoralization — the loss of a sense of coherence in the moral order around them. New values and a drastic reorganization of personality are needed. Religious protest may serve as a bridge by which a partially hopeful but demoralized minority can cross over into new status. Proclaimed as a separatist movement, it may serve as the agent of integration at a new level, depending on the way society responds to the mixture of hope and alienation that is its source.

These conditions produce what Anthony Wallace has called a revitalization movement. The chief function of revitalization movements is the reduction of cultural confusion. They are efforts to bring organization into a rich but disorderly field by eliminating some of the cultural elements, reducing the cultural repertoire to a more manageable size, combining what is left into a more orderly structure.

Yinger emphasizes conflict more than Wallace. Revitalization movements are efforts to wrest from a rapidly changing and anomic situation, not only a more orderly cultural structure, but also higher status. Whether the minority-group member is a Papuan overrun by European power or an urban African-American dominated by a white power structure, there is the same sense of old cultural forms being smashed, of inequities more deeply felt, and opportunities seeming more tantalizingly present.

Renewal and status improvement are related themes. How can minorities break away from the beliefs and tendencies of the dominant order? How, in view of their long-standing acceptance

of the old ways, and their hostility toward those who dominate them, can they acquire the beliefs, attitudes, behavior, and skills to make new opportunities meaningful? Certain standards and skills are needed, not only because the dominant majority requires them, but also because they are necessary to get jobs done. Certain levels of education, a sense of personal responsibility, the ability to defer gratification, and the like, are necessary for status improvement. But to adopt such standards can make you feel as though you are giving in to the majority and recognizing its supposed superiority. All minorities are faced with this dilemma. Although the dilemma applies to all lower-class individuals, minorities feel it more sharply because they have been categorically discriminated against.

A strong sectarian movement can reduce the sharpness of the dilemma. Sects can motivate individuals even under pessimistic conditions, and reduce feelings of ambivalence by defining values and standards in their own religious values, instead of seeing them as forced upon the minority by the majority. These functions are even more important in minority sects than in lower-class sects. Minority sects also reaffirm the vitality of the minority's distinctive cultural tradition, which helps draw separate groups together. Parts of the tradition may have to be synthesized to achieve unity across tribal, regional, or other lines of separation, and parts may have to furnish guidelines for the new circumstances out of which the sect developed. Cultural invention often takes the form of revelation to a prophet who proclaims the road not as something new, but as a return to the ways of the ancestors.

As with sects in general, minority sects vary in the balance between withdrawal and aggressive themes, in their attention to a glorious past or future, and in their emphasis on ascetic or licentious behavior. The brief descriptions that follow contain examples of similarities and differences between minority sects.

The Cargo Cults of Melanesia

For nearly a century, Melanesian islands have been swept by millenarian movements. These movements have been reactions to culture shock and domination by Europeans. Tribal societies have been seriously disrupted by a succession of shocks, by labor methods of plantation and mine overseers, by racial discrimination, and by military invasion. The contrast between missionary taught values and the conduct of those who dominated islanders only added to the confusion.

The native islanders could not return to life as it was, in part because whites had given islanders new desires and values, as well as undermined the old ways of life. The islanders also could not advance within white society, for their command of white ways was marginal. The stage was set for revitalization, and for casting social and economic aspirations in religious form. The movements have been called "cargo cults."

At first, cargo movements were nativistic and revivalist. The old order was affirmed, and would, they claimed, be reestablished, and the invaders driven from the land. In Fiji, for example, in 1877 and the years that followed, a self-proclaimed prophet preached a doctrine of resistance and hope. He declared that the order of things would soon be reversed, ancestors would return to the island, and independence would be restored.

> *Eternal life and eternal pleasures were to be the lot of the faithful. For the aged, youth would be renewed and desire would return. The shops would be jammed with calico, tinned salmon and other goods for the faithful, but unbelievers would die, or be condemned to everlasting hell-fire, or become the slaves and servants of believers.*[3]

Even back then, new needs and desires were expressed. The cargo movements became *a rudimentary form of revolutionary "nationalism."*[4] They gave separate tribal groups a sense of common fate and purpose. Contact with Europeans had abruptly increased the range of imagined opportunities while simultaneously disrupting established social structure and culture.

> *What makes the difference between an all too familiar political unrest combined with the economic disabilities of a multi-racial society, and the occurrence of a Cargo cult, is a sudden onset of moral and emotional passion concentrated to the point of action by and in the sort of man Mambu was. And the kinds of things a charismatic leader says, does, and encourages others to do, clearly reveal that the participants in a cult are striving after moral renovation. They want to put on the new man. Out of the crucible of moral regeneration they want to mold and shape for themselves and their children a new, more satisfying world.*[5]

Through several decades, cults in many parts of Melanesia developed along similar lines. The theme of "stolen cargo" became prominent. From their point of view, the white men were receiving vast supplies of goods by steamer and airplane from unknown sources. They did not manufacture them, and they sent back mere scraps of paper. The islanders believed that the goods were made by their own ancestors, and were stolen from them by the whites who had some secret control over the goods. Work was obviously not their secret.

Prophets appeared revealing the way to secure cargoes and re-establish native supremacy. They propounded a belief in ritual ways of achieving goals that were impossible — to defeat the whites and get mastery of their secret for obtaining the vast cargoes from ships and planes. Some of them built little copies of runways in the mountains, lighted at night by torches, to attract airplanes they were certain came from their own ancestors. They spent long nights over months and years, waiting for the planes that never landed.

The movements had to change, and face the fact that the old native order was gone forever. Successful movements had to carry their people through anomie to a new order. The new order could not be a simple extension of the European order. In the context of intercultural tension, against a background of political and military conflict, self-respect would not permit them to mimic Europeans. New values and new structures had to be achieved. In this, the Cargo cults were successful, in part because their leadership had the wisdom to adapt to the new circumstances. Over time, the islanders forged a new order, not a

perfect order, and not the old order, but a new and successful adaptation to the money economy and penetration of the area by European businesses.

Other minority movements face similar challenges. Their long-run effects depend upon the secular context in which the sects develop. As with the case of lower-class sects, minority sects can not be judged or understood exclusively from either a functional or a conflict perspective. They all demonstrate a tangle of positive and negative elements.

Religious Movements among Native Americans

The religious movements we are concerned with here were religious reactions, springing from a hybrid Indian-Christian situation, and white domination. The form of these movements was conditioned partly by the widespread Indian myth of a culture hero who would lead them to a terrestrial paradise. A large number of messianic movements developed from this myth, in the context of structural change, personal deprivation, and cultural confusion. Some movements united previously warring tribes against the common enemy, the white intruder, promising that it was now the Indian's time to conquer.

The *Ghost Dance* was the most widespread and dramatic Native movement. In it, religion helped overcome personal confusion and frustration, to re-establish the validity of Indian cultures, and to oppose the overwhelming power of the white man. It spread first in the early 1870's among tribes of the far West. It began with the vision of a Paiute shaman, Wodziwob. He prophesied that all the dead Indians would come back, brought to life by the dance. His own tribe did not adopt the movement, but his message spread to other tribes rapidly, sometimes through missionaries even. Those who danced were to see their dead relatives in a very few years, and the white people would disappear. The Dance was also thought to make the dancer invulnerable to bullets.

> *The great underlying principle of the Ghost Dance doctrine is that the time will come when the whole Indian race, living and dead, will be reunited upon a regenerated earth, to live a life of aboriginal happiness, forever free from death, disease, and misery.*[6]

The doctrine spread through various tribes, reviving fresh interpretations as it spread.

> *As it traveled, it appears that the tribes which took up the cult most hungrily were those suffering the greatest deterioration in their former ways of life, while those which were lukewarm or flatly rejected the dance were the ones who had had the least disturbance.*[7]

After a few years, the movement declined. Its promise remained unfulfilled. In 1890, however, another Paiute shaman, Wovoka, whose father had been associated with Wodziwob, received a vision that started another wave of the movement. He proclaimed some Christian ethical views, such as living in peace with one another and the whites, and avoid lying, stealing, and war. His doctrine forbid war with whites, yet foresaw their destruction.

This second version of the Dance spread quickly, not through the tribes that took up the movement originally, but across the Rockies to the Plains Indians, the Cheyenne, Arapaho, Pawnee, and Sioux. Here, it was understood against the background of white domination, cultural confusion among Indians, and the loss of the buffalo, with all that it meant for the Indian way of life. The Ghost Dance represented a renaissance of Indian culture.

The Dance was a last desperate attempt to re-establish the native values and to recover a sense of worthwhileness and meaning of life, while incorporating new values from the dominant group. Among the Sioux, it led to tragedy, for it precipitated the complicated series of events that brought about the Battle of Wounded Knee where more than two hundred Indians and sixty white soldiers were killed. With them, died the Dance among the Sioux.

Mooney interpreted the Ghost Dance as one of a universal species of religious movements that seek to recapture a lost Arcadia:

> *The lost paradise is the world's dreamland of youth. What tribe or people has not had its golden age, before Pandora's box was loosed, when women were nymphs and dryads and men were gods and heroes? And when the race lies crushed and groaning beneath an alien yoke, how natural is the dream of a redeemer, an Arthur, who shall return from exile or awake from some long sleep to drive out the usurper and win back for his people what they have lost. The hope becomes a faith and the faith becomes the creed of priests and prophets, until the hero is a god and the dream a religion, looking to some great miracle of nature for its culmination and accomplishment. The doctrines of the Hindu avatar, the Hebrew Messiah, the Christian millennium, and the...Indian Ghost Dance are essentially the same, and have their origin in a hope and longing common to all humanity.*[8]

When hope begins to fade, and when only a few can remember old times, or can see better times coming based on their own experience, avoidance and escapist themes are emphasized in sectarian movements. Among Native Americans white power and culture intruded further and further into their lives. In the twentieth century, the most important new religious movement among Native Americans was the Peyote Cult. By 1955, at least 77 tribes had some Peyote Cult members among them. The sect continued to grow. The proportion of members in tribes varies widely, suggesting that individual character, in addition to structural and cultural factors, must be taken into account in explaining membership patterns.

The most common quality of Peyotism is the ritual use of peyote to heighten religious experience. The effect of the drug ranges from mild euphoria to intense visions, often accompanied by nausea and anxiety. These differences are less significant than the widely shared feeling that the stimuli surrounding the user have become personally meaningful during the experience. The significance of surrounding stimuli may relate to health, power, wisdom, interpersonal relations, major life choices, and so on.

Peyotism is an accommodative response to economic deprivation and cultural confusion. It affirms Indian identity and self-respect. It is an effort to build a bridge between Indian and white culture, to provide Native Americans with a meaningful life as Indians in a society they can only partially influence.

Religious Movements Among African-Americans

African-American sectarian movements are products of the same causes as sectarianism in general, but there are some special factors that have affected it. African-American sectarian movements can be understood only in the total context of African-American's historical place in American society. In recent years there has been a drastic shift from acceptance and avoidance themes to protest. The shift must be examined in light of the past, including the persistence of at least a few African religious elements. Although there is wide disagreement among scholars concerning this persistence, this minimal statement would be accepted by most writers on the topic: The beliefs and rites of African-Americans, particularly of the rural and more isolated groups, contain some African elements. However the functions of these elements must be understood in terms of the contemporary situations faced by African-Americans. African religious elements do not explain the workings of African-American sects as attempts to struggle with life's problems. Instead, they help explain the symbolic expression of those problems.

Church segregation is another background factor that influenced the development of African-American religion. Integration began in American society in the 1940's, but by 1970, most African-Americans still attended segregated churches. In his report as secretary of the National Council of Churches in 1969, R. H. Edwin Espy wrote:

> *Could it not be that while we celebrate the new rapprochement between Catholics, Orthodox and Protestants we may be overlooking if not looking away from the deepest, and perhaps even increasing, alienation among ourselves...the wide gap between black and white brothers.*[9]

There are some countercurrents. In large Northern cities, perhaps half of the middle-class Protestant churches are racially integrated to some degree. There is substantial integration in Catholic churches. Sects, however, are seldom interracial. Few churches in the South have been integrated. Such integration as has occurred nationwide involves only a small proportion of individuals, perhaps one percent of African-Americans.

Segregation of churches is a product of several discriminatory influences — residential segregation, the slow tempo of change among white churches, and the desire on the part of some African-Americans for separate churches. Before the Civil War, common worship was the rule in the South, but this was not a sign of equality. Instead, it was an attempt by planters to control their slaves. At first, planters opposed having slaves in their churches, for an old unwritten law held that a Christian could not hold a fellow believer in bondage. Most churches, however, relaxed this doctrine, comforting themselves with the idea that equality before God has nothing to do with earthly status in society. This allowed the churches to accommodate themselves to slaveholders and gain support for missionary activities. Planters who feared Nat Turner style rebellions were impressed with the argument that properly taught, the gospel encourages submission to social authorities. Thus, integration in Southern churches before the Civil War was designed to preserve the civil relationship between masters and slaves.

The appearance of more segregated churches after the Civil War resulted from other religious and social needs, especially the desire of African-Americans to use religion as a protest against or adjustment to their low status, and their desire for churches under their own control. These issues would not have existed without prejudice and discrimination being pervasive. Although African-Americans took the initiative in forming separate churches, the motivating force was the unquestioned assumption of superiority and privileges among whites. Whites' complacent acceptance of the morality underlying the system of slavery divided the body of Christ along lines of race-as-class.

It is impossible to speak of *the* African-American church, for there is a wide variety of types among African-American churches. The continuum of types includes churches of the plantation South, churches in less isolated villages, churches in urban areas with lower-class members, and the churches of middle and upper-class African-Americans. As one moves through this succession of types, from the South to the North, and from lower to upper-class, members tend to be better educated. They have assimilated American values to a greater extent, and have more hope for improving their status in society. They also have stronger feelings of relative deprivation, a more secular outlook, and greater awareness of secular alternatives to religion. All of these characteristics influence the tendencies, needs, and religious forms found among various African-Americans.

The plantation church expresses the religious needs of a group almost completely cut off from equality and avenues to social status. These individuals accept society, compensating for their lack of status with compensatory status in heaven. These church members find emotional release from their difficult lives by the music, shouting, and dancing that are part of the services, much as is the case among lower-class churches in general. There is little asceticism. Instead of stressing self-control, they aid members in achieving satisfaction with life through ceremonies that relieve guilt and self-doubt.

The rural African-American church in non-plantation areas and villages took on additional functions. These churches engage in various recreational activities, in addition to religious services. Their members also have some hope for a better future, leading to greater attention to personal conduct and American values. Their organizational structures are more complex, and there are more opportunities for leadership in these churches. Their doctrine is still otherworldly, but they add an element of criticism of whites in their belief that social status on earth will be reversed in heaven, that the poor and the meek shall be high, in heaven. The meekness of this criticism disguises stronger, hidden feelings of aggression and dissatisfaction. Humbleness is

for many an attempt to rescue victory from defeat. Suffering is only a prelude to greater rewards. Individuals get power from suffering on this earth.

The protest element in African-American religion has become more direct in recent years, particularly among the better educated who have experienced the explosive mixture of status improvement *and* continuing discrimination. In the face of little power to overturn an oppressive system, overt religious themes remain oriented to acceptance and avoidance of society. Religion does not challenge what it can not hope to change. During the 1930's depression, the African-American church in the rural South did not blame the plantation system or other economic institutions for the poverty of black tenant farmers. Instead, these churches blamed the thriftlessness and sinfulness of individuals.

When African-American farmers moved to cities, they acquired new problems, new aspirations, and new possibilities. All of these affected their religion. They were still less educated, still used to vivid emotional expression in their services, and still unable to formulate a critique of the society which kept them in their place. They were also still segregated. Segregation stood in the way of full participation in Northern social life. For these people, their church continued to be the social center of their lives where clubs met, dances were held, music played, and friends were visited.

To the newly arrived migrant, church is usually a small, "store-front" sect, a place where one's sense of newness and strangeness is allayed. Members are taught new modes of dealing with the dominant whites, with increased emphasis on avoidance, self-reliance, and race consciousness. The ecstatic services of many of these religious groups enable members to escape the hardships and humiliations of life in a segregated, racially discriminating white society. The congeniality of church meetings affords fellowship, personal recognition, and tension release, so consoling to the formerly rural individual in the new urban situation. These religious groups strongly emphasize the supernatural rewards, downplaying rewards of this life.

Religion among the established urban African-Americans ranges from fairly standard Protestant sects to esoteric cults on the margin of Christian tradition. The cults emerged first during the 1930's depression. These cults shade off into organizations led by charlatans, racketeers who consciously exploit human misery for gain money and power, much as is the case among some televangelists in the 1980's such as Jim Baker. The cults are usually small, store-front groups, relatively short-lived, dominated by a leader, and often at sharp variance from the Christian mainstream. Not all groups remain small, however. Social conditions, a ready audience, and a charismatic leader may combine to sweep some of them into prominence. For example, this is the case with a Voodoo Cult in Detroit that is related to the Black Muslims.

Benyon described its appeal to recent migrants. This esoteric cult was started about 1930 by a prophet from Mecca to teach that the black men of North America are not "Negroes," but members of the lost tribe of Shebazz who had been stolen by traders from Mecca 379 years before. Fard came to restore the true language, nation, literature, and religion of this lost tribe. To solve their problems, followers must obey the prophet of Allah, change their names (Fard usually received 10 dollars for each new name.), and accept the self-disciplines and mild asceticism of the group. Most of the 8,000 individuals who Benyon estimated joined the Voodoo Cult were recent migrants from the South. Shocked by the discovery that the North was not the great land of hope, disillusioned when they discovered that the whites who mistreated them worshipped the same god, caught in poverty and unemployment, crowded into slums, they found an appeal in this drastic redefinition of their situation.[10]

Such cult tendencies are not limited to African-Americans, of course. They simply experienced in accentuated form many of the pressures that some whites experienced, combined with their categorically low status. Nor were cultist movements the dominant movements among African-Americans, many of whom found it uncongenial to depart so widely from the Christian heritage they closely identified with.

Among those who continued to be associated with Christian churches and sects, native urbanites developed somewhat different tendencies and needs that affected their religious behavior. For them, race consciousness took on a growing importance. More of the goals and values of America had been absorbed, so that their frustration took on added sharpness. Forms of protest were nearer at hand, making the escapist doctrines of some religious groups seem less attractive.

Despite these changes, an otherworldly emphasis remained predominant among these churches, as it does, indeed, among most churches, even those of more prosperous whites. But moral questions received more attention, even when they were related to social problems. Established urban African-Americans were less and less willing to accept that "the meek shall inherit the earth," or that "when I get to heaven, gwine put on my shoes...and robe...and crown." There was an increasing hope and demand that they have shoes on this earth. Churches that failed to sustain that hope were left behind. Whether "my home is over Jordan" is a deep spiritual insight, a brilliant adjustment mechanism, or a hopeless mirage, it was supplemented with the demand for at least some economic relief from lower-class oppression.

The traditionally religious are, on average (with important exceptions), less likely to be militant in the civil rights movement than are those who are less closely connected with churches and sects. Among a nationwide sample of African-Americans living in metropolitan areas, Gary Marx found that militancy declined from 49% among the not-religious to 19% among the very religious.[11] Note, however, that his definition of religiosity was a composite scale, emphasizing religiosity in a traditional sense of the term as orthodoxy, attendance, and importance attributed to religion in one's life. If religiosity is defined in non-traditional terms, the results of his survey would have been different, as will be discussed shortly in relation to the Black Power movement.

Marx also found that members of the smaller sects were least militant, those in predominantly African-American denominations in the middle, and those in largely white denominations most militant. In recent years, Black Power

factions have developed among Episcopalians, Lutherans, Methodists, the United Church, Catholics, and even Unitarians.

This last development, that in its most extreme expression claims belief in a black Jesus with a revolutionary message, is a connecting link between the established de nominations and the separatist Black Power movement. It reminds us of the steady stream of protest flowing from African-American churches and religious leaders that draws its power from a religion very much concerned with otherworldly bliss. Denmark Vesey and Nat Turner were preachers who drew justification for their rebellions from religion. Steady, less drastic protest had already begun to develop in Northern African-American churches in the 1930's and in the Southern African-American churches in the 1950's. Religious leaders who wanted to appeal to the urban population of African-Americans, particularly to the better educated among them, had to emphasize race in their messages. They encouraged support of African-American businesses and professionals, preaching the doctrine of the "double-duty dollar." They encouraged and led boycotts against firms that discriminated against African-American workers or customers. The 1955-56 Montgomery Alabama bus boycott was a prominent example of this, but by no means the first. It was important for projecting Dr. Martin Luther King into the forefront of African-American leadership. It is a convenient mark of the beginning of a militant period. There were many religious sentiments underlying this militancy that can best be understood by seeing them in the larger context of efforts to increase Black Power.

Black Power in the 1960's:
An Aggressive Sectarian Movement

The Black Power movement of the 60's illustrates the principle that those who experience improvement are most likely to protest the slow pace and meaninglessness of their improvements. To some extent, this is because secular social movements are often legitimated in intellectual terms based on social science models that are unintelligible or unavailable to the less educated.

Once some improvements have occurred, subsequent improvement can rarely keep pace with rising expectations. Such rewards as the old order furnished—predictability, and sacred systems that gave meaning to being underprivileged—are smashed, and their place is taken by a sense of relative deprivation and status decrystalization.

There is much controversy over the extent to which conditions among African-Americans during the period between 1940 and 1970 improved. Indeed, a kind of professional pessimism has been characteristic of social scientists and liberals, as well as African-American leaders. One is accused of insensitivity to the depths of the problems of African-Americans if one points to gains. One can prove opposition to discrimination only by citing the most negative statistics. This phenomenon has influenced the course of social change, to some extent, independently of conditions themselves.

Prophetic exaggeration may have strategic and therapeutic value, or it may contribute to polarization and vicious cycles of conflict. Yinger, agonizing over how to judge the Black Power movement without succumbing to pressure on any side, argues that the Black Power movement developed for several reasons.
Black Power has caught on in part due to the political and economic gains African-Americans have made in American society, including vast increases in voter-registration, and educational and economic improvement among some segments of the African-American population. It has also caught on because of an economic downward slide among other segments in comparison with whites, because of political under-representation through gerrymandering of political districts, and because of very high rates of unemployment, especially among unskilled young males. The Economic gains African-American's made were greatest during wartime periods when employment was full. Whites compare African-Americans with their pre-World War II counterparts and find their situation vastly improved. African-Americans compare themselves with whites, and find their relative economic position has worsened since World War II.

The importance of *relative deprivation* is shown by the fact that the most militant African-Americans are those best off educationally and economically, with highest hopes for the future. Gary Marx found that 14% of lower-class African-Americans were militant, 31% of middle-class African-Americans, and 45% of upper-class African-Americans.[12]

It is not enough to know that there has been improvement and that relative deprivation has increased. These changes occurred in particular cultural environments. The Black Power movement in America, despite its hostility to much of the American social system, draws its ideological weapons from the system it seeks to change. It draws them selectively, as any aggressive sect does. It does not need to go outside the religious and political traditions of the nation to find an arsenal for its conflict with American society. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton saw Black Power as an expression of a long-established American process:

> *The adoption of the concept of Black Power is one of the most legitimate and healthy developments in American politics and race relations in our time...It is a call for black people in this country to unite, to recognize their heritage, to build a sense of community...group solidarity is necessary before a group can operate effectively from a bargaining position of strength in a pluralistic society. Traditionally, each new ethnic group in this society has found the route to social and political validity through the organization of its own institutions with which to represent its needs within the larger society.*[13]

Most militant movements appeal to tradition to reduce opposition and gain legitimacy. Reactionary, conservative, and liberal movements do the same thing. In his famous *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, Dr. Martin Luther King developed the theme that civil disobedience and extremism express both Christian and American traditions, not to mention the Jewish, Greek, and other sources he drew upon. *Jesus Christ was an extremist for love, truth and goodness, and thereby rose above his environment. Perhaps the South, the nation and the world are in dire need of creative extremists.*[14]

The phrase *Black Power* has many meanings. The conflict element that characterizes all of its varieties shades off on one side into violence or the rhetoric of violence, and on the other side shades off into activities that permit or even seek the support of the white population. Insofar as these latter activities are religious, they link the Black Power movement with protests coming from established denominations.

Militancy within the Black Power movement ranges from the relatively low level of militancy characterized by

1. little interest in cooperation with whites
2. organization of African-Americans for focused attack on inequality by the use of political, economic, and religious means
3. disdain for efforts to win equality through law and persuasion

to the relatively moderate level of militancy characterized by

1. self-segregation
2. violence is a necessary strategy
3. the existing social system must be destroyed
4. the ideology of African-American domination, not just equality

to the relatively high level of militancy characterized by

1. an explicit emphasis on conflict by means of nonviolent protests and the increase of African-American morale (civil disobedience in the Ghandian sense where needed
2. organized political and economic action by African-American people

Note that as militancy increases, organized action becomes more likely. Hostile rhetoric and advocating violence are not the foci of this three-part set of categories.

According to Nathan Wright, *Black power is fundamentally a religious concept.*[15] This is revealed by its dedicated attention to self-discovery and justice, the sacred quality of belief in it — a quality of unquestioned truthfulness of the doctrine — the sense of an exclusive brotherhood, and the beatification of its martyrs.

> *What is new about "Black Power" is phraseology rather than substance. Black consciousness has roots in the organization of Negro churches and mutual benefit societies in the early days of the republic, the ante-bellum convention movement, the Negro colonization schemes of the 19th century, DuBois' concept of Pan-Africanism, Booker T. Washington's advocacy of race pride, self-help, and racial solidarity, the Harlem Renaissance, and the Garvey movement. The decade after World War I — which saw the militant race-proud "new Negro," the relatively widespread theory of retaliatory violence, and the high tide of the Negro-support-of-Negro business ideology — exhibits striking parallels with the 1960's.*
>
> *Similarly, there are striking parallels between both of these periods and the late 1840's and 1850's when ideologies of self-help, racial solidarity, separatism and nationalism, and the advocacy of organized rebellion were widespread.*
> *The theme of retaliatory violence is hardly new for American Negroes. Most racial disorders in American history until recent years, were characterized by white attacks on Negroes. But Negroes retaliated violently during Reconstruction, just after World War I, and in the last four years.*[16]

It is important to be aware of the historical continuity of the African-American's struggle for equality and self-determination. The father of Malcolm X was an organizer for Marcus Garvey. Booker T. Washington seemed less old-fashioned to black separatists than he did to their integrationist predecessors. It is also important to be aware of contemporary factors that include the urbanization of African-Americans in the 20th century; their increase in education which has furnished leadership, energy, and ambition; increased income during the 20th century, and serious decline in income since 1980; worldwide rebellion with the African states furnishing an important model; American affluence that is widely visible on TV and in movies; the general increase in social mobility in American society; and new tactics of force and violence in a society made increasingly vulnerable to the acts of a few by the growth of networks of interdependence and technology.

Continuity and change are seen in the development of the Black Muslims. One of the lieutenants of W. D. Fard, the leader of the Voodoo cult, was a man who took the name of Elijah Muhammad. Gradually, by the late 1950's, the Black Muslims became a nationally prominent sect. Estimates of the size of the movement vary from 10,000 to 200,000 or more. In various public opinion polls, support for the Black Muslims and their most important leaders, Elijah Muhammad and Malcolm X, has been at about 5% of African-American respondents. It is not a numerically significant sect. However, many individuals find the Muslim challenge to white society attractive, in spite of their reluctance to formally join the movement. The Black Muslims are part of a much larger movement. Their effect, particularly through the work of Malcolm X, on later expressions of Black Power has been great. Malcolm X's *Autobiography*, which has sold well over a million copies, has become one of the testaments of the freedom movement.

The ultimate appeal of the movement *is the chance to become identified with a power strong enough to overcome the domination of the white man — and perhaps even to subordinate him in turn.*[17]

The aims, in the words of a Muslim minister, are *To get the white man's foot off my neck, his hands out of my pocket and his carcass off my back. To sleep in my own bed without fear, and to look straight into his cold blue eyes and call him a liar every time he parts his lips.*[18]

The doctrine of the Black Muslim movement is built around a reconstruction of history. They are the lost nation of Islam. Their salvation rests upon the rediscovery of its tradition. All science is the product of the discoveries of twenty-four original black scientists, thousands of years ago. White men are "Yakub's

devils," the creation of an evil black scientist. They were driven out of paradise into West Asia (Europe).

The sect preaches a stern ethic. Every Muslim is required to attend at least two services a week, and to give generously in support of the program. They are urged to live respectably with their families, without gambling, drinking, smoking, buying on credit, or overeating. Responsible workmanship is emphasized. Separation from the white man, occupationally, educationally, residentially, and religiously, is preferred. This is sometimes expressed as a desire for a separate nation in the South. With the growth of mosques, schools, and businesses in the major cities of America, the rhetoric of withdrawal has been heard less often.

The Black Muslims are a revitalization movement, to use Anthony Wallace's phrase. The seek to construct a more satisfying culture, and to discover a new self.

> *The lower-class Negro...is grateful for a mystique, especially one dignified as a religion, that rationalizes his resentment and hatred as spiritual virtues in a cosmic war of good against evil...The true believer who becomes a Muslim casts off at last his old self and takes on a new identity. He changes his name, his religion, his homeland, his "natural" language, his moral and cultural values, his very purpose in living. He is no longer a Negro, so long despised by the white man that he has come almost to despise himself. Now he is a Black Man — divine, ruler of the universe, different only in degree from Allah Himself.*[19]

Essien-Udom sees Elijah Muhammad's work and thought as an explicit attempt to reduce alienation:

> *He seeks to provide the Negro with a spiritual and moral context within which shaken pride and confidence may be restored and unused or abused energies directed toward an all-encompassing goal; to heal the wound of the Negro's dual membership in American society.*[20]

This may seem paradoxical, given the movement's exclusivity and antagonism to whites.

The paradox is resolved by the fact that the Muslims have shifted from the individual goal of integration to that of group integration, or from assimilation to pluralism. This caused a moderation of the emphasis on separatism and hostility. The Black Muslims are increasingly more focused on building programs and businesses in cities than speaking of a separate nation. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Minister Louis Farrakhan insisted that charges of Muslim anti-white racism were unfounded. He portrayed the doctrine as pro-black. *The purpose is to give the poor black man pride in himself and love for himself as the first stage. The second is that he should start to build for himself — we are in the second stage now.*[21] This has not always been true, especially of the early period of the movement. A drama, written and staged by the Muslims carried the lines: *I charge the white man with being the greatest liar on earth...the greatest drunkard on earth...the greatest gambler on earth...I charge the white man, ladies and gentlemen of the jury, with being the greatest peace-breaker on earth...[and] the greatest adulterer on earth.*[22]

This should not suggest that the sect has a plan for changing its message, rather than evolving in response to changing circumstances. Whatever the cause, change is occurring. It is not from sect to church, but from hostile, separatist sect to a more controlled, conflict-oriented and pluralistic sect. It was in that direction that Malcolm X was moving in the last months of his life. It was the basis of his split with the Muslims. He became convinced that extreme separatism was detrimental to the cause. He began to condemn racism, white or black. He felt encouraged in this view by a trip he took to Mecca where he came into contact with orthodox white Muslims. On the other hand, he stressed the development of separate organizations. When asked what sympathetic whites could do, he replied:

> *The first thing I tell them is that at least where my own particular Black Nationalist organization, the Organization of Afro-American Unity, is concerned, they can't "join" us...I tell sincere white people "Work in conjunction with us — each of us working among our own kind..." Working separately, the sincere white people and sincere black people actually will be working together.*[23]

The Black Muslims have not moved to this position. Those among them who appeal most often to the memory of Malcolm X are the most militant wing of the Black Power movement. They are a secularized and politicized version of the Black Muslims, who appeal to a more educated, sophisticated, and hopeful yet alienated group. They find ample justification for violence in the life of Malcolm X. They think they can win, because modern cities are extremely vulnerable to the acts of a small and dedicated group. But the definition of religion is stretched too far if we include the more extreme Black Power positions in the category. When violence is not only accepted as bitter necessity but exalted as a purifying force, it is not easily seen as a road to salvation. Yet we will not see the full implications of black radicalism if we fail to see even in its most violent forms the ultimate commitment and ultimate concern that mark its religious qualities. Violence is sometimes acclaimed as a religious process. Jean-Paul Sartre wrote: *Fanon...shows clearly that this irrepressible violence is neither sound nor fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself.*[24]

For a revolutionary movement, violence serves some of the same functions that severe asceticism, stern membership standards, and "chosen people" separatism serve in a less drastic way for an aggressive sect. Violence cuts the participant off irrevocably from society, helping guarantee the perpetrators' loyalty and utter dedication to the movement. They have no other place to go. It also reduces ambivalence. If *we* hate them enough to attack and even kill them, then *we* are not like them, *we* do not accept their appraisal of *us*, or recognize that we share the burdens of the human condition. In this way, violence purges self-hatred, anger, and resentment from the heart of minorities, thrusting out what otherwise may remain inside, turned against the self. Extremists spend a great deal of emotional energy in repressing that second self who, in recognizing shared humanity, might endanger a dearly bought dedication to a new and difficult doctrine of salvation.

Compared with Müntzer or Fanon, the words of most Black Power advocates in the United States seem less extreme. Stokely Carmichael, at one time the most prominent spokesperson for Black Power, took a range of positions from time to time. The most extreme called for guerrilla warfare and organized revolution. He expressed these ideas when he was in Cuba or Africa. In *Black Power*, he and Charles Hamilton took a stand closer to American political radicalism. The book is conflict oriented, but it speaks a language of political struggle and pluralism. This tone is best illustrated by a quotation they use from Frederick Douglass:

> *Those who* profess *to favor freedom yet deprecate agitation, are men who want crops without plowing up the ground; they want rain without thunder and lightning. They want the ocean without the awful roar of its many waters...Power concedes nothing without demand. It never did and it never will. Find out just what any people will quietly submit to and you have found out the exact measure of injustice and wrong which will be imposed upon them, and these will continue till they are resisted with either words or blow, or with both. The limits of tyrants are prescribed by the endurance of those whom they oppress.*[25]

It is important to note that Stokely Carmichael, Rap Brown, Eldridge Cleaver, Harry Edwards, and other radicals prominent in the 1960's had little in the way of organizational bases. They were denounced by liberal African-Americans and were largely ignored by the masses. Malcolm X might have been able to transform the Black Muslim sect into a more indigenous movement, less bound by a rigid ideology.

Dr. Martin Luther King had by far the greatest charismatic appeal of any African-American in the 1960's. In the twelve years of his leadership, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference developed increasingly into an aggressive sect with a national power base. It was being radicalized in the context of growing impatience, and in competition with more extreme Black Power advocates, so that King was beginning to advocate not simply nonviolent resistance, but civil disobedience to disrupt society and obtain greater black control of ghettoes. He continued to emphasize nonviolence, cooperation with whites in the civil rights movement, and integration. With his assassination, the SCLC lost its best spokesperson. The SCLC gradually receded into the background, along with the entire civil rights movement as the Viet Nam War wound down, OPEC drove up oil prices, the national debt began to soar, and inflation rose steeply in the 1970's.

Malcolm X and Dr. Martin Luther King, who were assassinated in 1965 and 1968, respectively, were the individuals most likely to lead major protest sects among African-Americans. Malcolm X appealed to the more alienated and conflict-oriented people, while King appealed to the more hopeful and integrationist-minded. Both drew on the same large pool of African-Americans who were deeply frustrated, angry, and action-minded. Faced with great obstacles, these people find meaningful only the *sanctified* knowledge that their burdens will be lifted. They do not respond so strongly to secular reasoning that is constantly subject to reason and questioning. Faith focuses and controls anger and gives one the self-discipline necessary to carry on for years, if necessary. Without faith, protesters are more likely to be drawn into random, nihilistic acts of protest that cannot reform society, only destroy society, or they will become bitter and self-destroying in resignation.

Will America once again be witness to an aggressive sect with power, charismatic leadership, and organization, to help carry through the destruction of racism and the rebuilding of broken spirits, while preserving the larger sense of community? The answer depends not so much on the appearance of a prophet as on the total context. Improvements in the conditions of life among African-Americans would support such a sect. It would probably be very aggressive and more pluralistic than integrationist. The memory of inequality and injustice is too vivid to permit less.

Consequences of Religious Trends Among Minorities

Most of the consequences of lower-class sects apply also to minority sects, but a few additional observations will summarize the relationship between sectarianism and stratification. There are sharply contrasting opinions concerning whether sects help or hinder the progress of minorities. The following quotation expresses the positive image of sects among minorities as psychologically relieving:

> *It must come as a great relief as well as release to such people to enter into the spirit of a group like one of the holiness cults, with its offer of assurance through grace and sanctification, and the knowledge that they will be aided not only in their efforts to support their customary burdens, but that in addition they will be equipped to measure arms with the white man, something they scarcely dreamed of doing previous to their advent into the North.*[26]

Compare that with the following statement expressing a negative image of sectarian religion among minorities as a hindrance in the struggle for equality and justice:

> *Way back in the 1830's Harriet Martineau noted the advertisements in the New Orleans papers of the sales of occasional lots of "pious Negroes" as being an especially good bargain. They would give no trouble here and now. The modern radical Negro agitator regards his pious brothers as one of his liabilities; they are an obstacle to the full and final freedom of the race.*[27]

These two supposed results of sectarian religion — making a terribly difficult status bearable while at the same time making it more likely — are not as mutually exclusive as they might seem. The second flows from the first. Whether sectarian religion is functional or dysfunctional depends on the values and perceptions from which one judges them. To someone who opposes racial discrimination and seeks its end, avoidance-withdrawal sects are dysfunctional because they stand in the way of aggression. To someone who believes discrimination has no remedy, that whites are overpoweringly dominant, sects are functional for the oppressed as an adaptive mechanism. Change vs. adaptation, this is the point of argument amongst African-Americans and others who support their cause.

The matter is even more complex, because an accommodative sect may plant and nurture seeds of hope that grow into action at a later time when individuals are better prepared for struggle and the situation is more amenable to change. Moreover, the doctrines of accommodative sects must not be understood too literally. They often consist of disguised and deflected aggression in the context of an apparently hopeless situation. Likewise, doctrines of aggression can be disguised forms of accommodation, as when a doctrine is conceived and adopted as a *strategy*, rather than a basic belief. Opposition often makes accommodation *possible* by defining accommodation in ways that make it self-assertive rather than surrendering to the majority group.

Organizational strategies are an important source of the complex relations between aggression and accommodation. An African-American minister may find his need for leadership among his congregation, *and* his need for financial and political support from influential whites both served by a segregated church and the beliefs that support it. The use of segregation as a strategy is unlikely to be expressed in the ideology of the church, though the leaders may be well aware of it. For the congregation, this would be a latent function of their values.

Whether sectarian religion is functional or dysfunctional also depends on who is participating in the sect. For some, it may be a good thing, while for others it may hinder their development and political action. Much of this revolves around the question of practical alternatives. There are many ways in which people respond to difficult problems they face. There are religious solutions, political solutions, economic solutions, psychological solutions, and so on. Also, there are no solutions, as when individuals experience utter personal demoralization and depression, and the loss of any will to act or even to live. This has happened to some Native Americans and to members of other societies overwhelmed by a powerful invading group.

Aggressive sects create hostility. More importantly, though, they express hostility that already exists. They give hostility a symbolic interpretation, and under some circumstances use it to carry the group over into a new life. The new life is beginning to open, yet is blocked by enormous barriers of self and social structure. Yinger calls this the *bridging function* of aggressive sects. The bridge must be anchored on both sides, in the past and in the future. The responses of the majority group are critical in determining the long-run consequences of an aggressive sect. Repression and disregard of the conditions from which the sect springs escalate the conflict, with hostility spilling over into violence. Under other circumstances, the sect may be see as a sign of needed changes. Churches may take over some of the message; political and economic changes may moderate the problems from which the sect has sprung. If more effective means for seeking change become available, the protest element in religion abates.

To put the sequence of changes into a simple formula, when an aggressive sect meets escalating resistance, it first redoubles its efforts and attack on society. It thereby loses its more moderate members, and alienates groups with which it worked in coalition earlier. With hope diminished, fewer persons are attracted to its promise of decisive victory. Withdrawal sects, with otherworldly goals, or with visions of the Kingdom of God, take the place of the aggressive sect. This was the sequence of events for the left-wing of the Protestant Reformation. The Black Power movement would have gone the same way, but for some accommodation to African-Americans by white society. Liberal African-Americans are divided in their attitudes, but many condemn aggression. The great majority of African-Americans are opposed to the most hostile forms of aggression. The black-white coalition that was involved in the civil rights movement was seriously strained by the Black Power movement.

When an aggressive sect operates in a context where its people's problems are improved by society's response, the sects becomes more moderate. It does not take intense resocialization and remoralization to work within a society that sustains one's hope. Efforts to win secular improvement are shifted into political and economic channels. So long as barriers to improvement are so high that self-respect is threatened, political and economic questions are religious questions, they involve ultimate issues. One attempts to deal with them through sacred beliefs and rites. But when the ground of one's being is not being threatened, one can afford to transfer these issues into the secular sphere.

The election of some African-Americans to high office indicates improvement, even though there is contrary evidence of mounting hostility and repression. When such election comes from black-white coalition, it is a sign that tendencies toward repression are outweighed by readiness to change. Black Power cannot survive as a holy crusade in the face of real success. It is not at all clear, though, whether the *deprivation-aggression-repression-withdrawal* cycle or the *deprivation-aggression-modification-participation* cycle is dominant in the United States today. Both are likely to operate along side each other for years to come. Violence sacralizes conflict, because spilling blood is always a religious sacrifice, whether of one's own or of other people. When sacredness enters into the equation, democratic compromises are made almost impossible.

> *A severe religion may be the only way to save the selves of those who have escaped serfdom, have had their hopes mightily raised, only to run into insuperable barriers. Yet it is unwise to applaud an aggressive sect that polarizes a society and converts the pursuit of goals into a sacred battle—when it has quite effective secular means and many potential allies to help in their attainment.*
>
> *In my judgment, there is a* ***tendency*** *for the religious movements of minority groups to be functional...they slowly and partially demonstrate an adjustment to the actual limiting conditions and possibilities of life. It is in the* ***lag****, however, the slowness to respond to changes in the conditions and possibilities, that critics of religion (friendly or otherwise) are likely to find their most useful point of departure and the analyst of religion some of his most difficult problems.*[28]

References

1. George E. Simpson, "The Ras Tafari Movement in Jamaica: A Study of Race and Class Conflict," *Social Forces*, December, 1955, pp. 167-170.

2. Milton Yinger, *The Scientific Study of Religion*, 1970, p. 315.

3. Peter Worsley, *The Trumpet Shall Sound*, 1955, pp. 20-21.

4. Peter Lawrence, *Road Belong Cargo*, 1964.

5. Kenelm Burridge, *Mambu: A Melanesian Millennium*, 1960, p. xviii.

6. James Mooney, *The Ghost-Dance Religion and the Sioux Outbreak of 1890*, 1965, p. 19.

7. William Howells, *The Heathens: Primitive Man and His Religions*, 1948, p. 270.

8. James Mooney, *op. cit.*, p. I.

9. *New York Times*, Jan. 22, 1969, p. 23, quoted in Milton Yinger, *op. cit.*, p. 325.

10. E. D. Benyon, "The Voodoo Cult among Negro Migrants to Detroit, *American Journal of Sociology*, May 1938, pp. 894-907.

11. Gary Marx, *Protest and Prejudice*, 1967, p. 102.

12. *Ibid.*, p. 87.

13. Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *Black Power*, 1967, pp. 44-45.

14. Martin Luther King, *Why We Can't Wait*, 1963, p. 89.

15. Nathan Wright, "Black Power: What? Why? How?" *Social Action*, January, 1968, p. 24.

16. *Report of the National Advisory Commission on Civil Disorders*, 1968, p. 234.

17. C. Eric Lincoln, *The Black Muslims in America*, 1961, p. 27.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 48 and 108.

20. Essien-Udom, *Black Nationalism: A Search for Identity in America*, 1962, p. 14.

21. *New York Times*, Thomas A. Johnson reporting, January 13, 1969, p. 26.

22. Quoted by C. Eric Lincoln, *op cit.*, pp. 3-4.

23. Malcolm X, *The Autobiography of Malcolm X*, pp. 376-377.

24. In the Jean-Paul Sartre's preface to Frantz Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, 1963, p. 21.

25. Frederick Douglas, quoted by Stokely Carmichael and Charles Hamilton, *op. cit.*, p. x.

26. Arthur H. Fauset, *Black Gods of the Metropolis*, Vol. 3 of publications of the Philadelphia Anthropological Society, 1944, p. 81.

27. Williard L. Sperry, *Religion in America*, 1946, pp. 195-196.

28. Milton Yinger, *op. cit.*, p. 345.