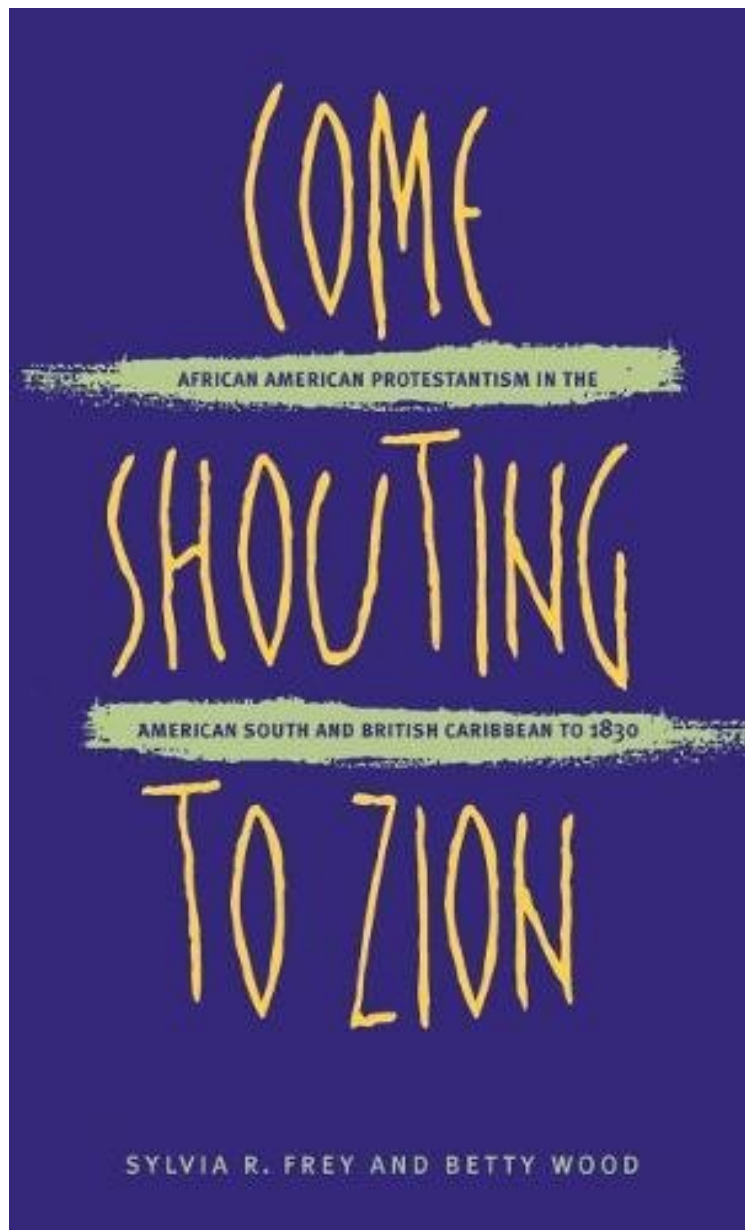


(Download free pdf) Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830

## **Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830**

*Sylvia R. Frey, Betty Wood*

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**Sylvia R. Frey, Betty Wood : Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and

all praised *Come Shouting to Zion: African American Protestantism in the American South and British Caribbean to 1830*:

0 of 3 people found the following review helpful. ClassBy tswestonI ordered this book for an upcoming class. Therefore, I haven't read it yet. The topic, however, is interesting and important to our understanding of the development of Civil Rights and U.S. history as a whole.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. the authors would have done better if they had explained how they arrived at their ...By Joseph Stuart Sylvia Frey's and Betty Wood's *Come Shouting to Zion* provides a helpful backdrop to understanding the African American religious milieu before 1830. In their groundbreaking work, Frey and Wood analyze the Protestantization of peoples of African descent from fifteenth-century West Africa to nineteenth-century America through tracing the development of different Protestant groups across the British Atlantic World. In due course, they reveal the failure of Anglicans and similar groups to gain converts because of their rigid structures, the opposition of slavers having their chattel slaves preached to, and the success of evangelical sects that emphasized conversion experiences and formed biracial spaces for their converts. Also important are the authors' analysis of the complex relationships between religious whites and blacks from the colonial period to 1830. Frey and Wood add significant arguments to the historiography of African-American religion. First, Frey and Wood provide information on the religious cultures of West Africa, including indigenous traditions, Christianity, and Islam, and then demonstrate that these faiths survived the Middle Passage. This allows the authors to trace the diversity of African-American Christianity's to Africa, not only the United States and the Caribbean. Second, the authors incorporate the conversion of African-descended peoples into the history of the Black Atlantic, connecting Britain's colonies in the western hemisphere to Europe and Africa. This presents readers with an "entangled" history of the growth of African Americans' embrace of Protestantism that moves beyond national barriers and circumscribes black Protestants within global communities. Frey and Wood also emphasize the importance and power of women in black Protestantism, uncovering their roles in the teachings, adoption, and spread of Protestantism over more than three centuries. One issue is the reliance upon the institutional records written and maintained by whites. While researchers can understand the lack of sources written by peoples of African descent, the authors would have done better if they had explained how they arrived at their confusions (especially arguments about the relative unimportance of black male preachers). Still, *Come Shouting to Zion* is a good book that could have been a great book with more careful analysis and better integration into the historiography.13 of 14 people found the following review helpful. Good Work on Religious AppropriationBy Dennis R. HidalgoIt is almost impossible for the reader to miss the central theme of *Come Shouting to Zion*. The authors made sure that its composite but unifying motif recurs constantly within its pages. Divided into its three thematic parts, the book argues that African-American conversion to Protestantism did not happen in a vacuum; that African religious traditions influenced the new form of Protestantism created among the slaves; and that the role of women, as in African traditions, was vital in the process of conversion and transformation of their form of Protestantism. In a more basic way, the authors convincingly contend that African-Americans, in the South and British Caribbean, were propelled by their own experiences and cultural backgrounds to actively participate in the process of their Christianization. This book starts with the 16th century Italian Cappuccinos in Africa and ends around the 1830s Antebellum. The purpose of starting in Africa was to draw parallels between African religious traditions and African-American religious experiences. The authors also dealt with a plethora of primary sources, beginning with missionary records in African, and ending with American churches' official documents. Probably most importantly is that the authors also considered a large number of recent (and not so recent) scholarly works in related areas. Indeed, we might say that this book is better understood if we consider the scholarly context in which it was conceived. This book, for example, consistently referred to Jon Butler's "A Wash in a Sea of Faith." This is so because the authors were concerned with disproving one of Butler's more daring thesis: that the African-American conversion to Protestantism starting with the Great Revival happened because the African slaves experienced a spiritual holocaust. This holocaust, Butler argued, was the annihilation of the African religious cosmology right in the midst of the time when they needed it the most: in their slavery. Consequently, when Methodists and Baptists enthusiastically came to share their religion to the slaves, the spiritually deprived slaves were eager and open to the new message. Frey and Wood asserted that Butler's thesis is without foundation and that African religious traditions resisted and survived despite coercion and the advances of the SPG. The authors show plenty of evidence that African religions were alive and well after the slaves arrival to America. Among their examples are the fearful "Obeah," and the proliferation of women mediums. Following the chronology of the events, the authors move into explaining why the Anglican Church failed to produce inroads among the slaves: "because their version of Christianity found no confirmation in the reality of daily life in the quarters." (80) For example, Anglicanism provided no convincing answer to the question of their suffering. On the other hand, John Wesley, George Whitefield, and many Baptists were able not only to identify themselves with the slaves, but to impart a message of assurance with its emphasis on social justice and hope (i.e., the promise of the millennium, spiritual regeneration and attacks on slavery). Furthermore, the structural flexibility of these dissident religions, the availability for African-American leadership, the attraction of the written word, and the "fact that they revolved around a constant cultural core [that] provided

continuity with the African past, [made] the transition to evangelical Protestant Christianity possible." (101) It is nothing new that Evangelicalism provided a platform for the new American identity being formed among the African slaves at the turn of the 19th century. But Frey and Wood made this point pivotal in their quest to prove the Africanization of Protestantism. Among the characteristics that gave African-American Protestantism a tone of its own was their type of worship, and more specifically the shouting for conversion. Furthermore, another of the traits that made African-American Protestantism unique was the important role of women in evangelism and church management. These and other characteristics plus the development of a form of Christianity supportive of slave-owners' ideology, however, served to separate gradually whites from blacks by the Second Great Awakening. Despite its multiple origin, lively worship and shouting became associated with undisciplined and unintelligent African behavior. Already by 1790 and more so by 1830s, African-American Protestantism had developed its own religious identity, which was "both similar to and different from their African past and from evolving white religious culture." (181) This new form of Protestantism contrasted with the individualistic and egocentric message favored by white leaders. Their exuberant and participatory worship also differed from the white Protestant community. In sum, the development of African-American Protestantism came into being upon a "continual negotiation" between black and white church members. Overall, this book is a marvelous scholarly work. It draws from previous works as Mechal Sobel, John Thornton, and many others, and put in place a picture that was intrinsically previewed by many, namely, that African-Americans were not passive, but active in the formation of their form of Christianity. Its extended perspective, in time and space, was much needed to provide a convincing periodization. However, it is here that the book is more open to criticism. The intend of providing a comparative approach between the British Caribbean and the North American South, was to trace similarities among closely related patterns. Yet, the way that the book is organized, it does not lend itself to an easy-to-follow comparison. The moving from Antigua, for example, to Georgia, is often made without warning and without enough circumstantial support. The reader might easily think that some of the British islands are brought only to prove a forced parallelism, while their collective experience is being ignored. Furthermore, it is difficult to follow how the chronological patterns are similar in the majority of cases presented. These, and others, are weak-links common to works that aim to cover such a broad subject without using case studies as anchor examples. Nevertheless, the main achievements of the book are not darkened by these shortcomings. It is very probable that many of the future works in African-American religious history will be motivated by the thesis and arguments that Frey Wood present in this book.

The conversion of African-born slaves and their descendants to Protestant Christianity marked one of the most important social and intellectual transformations in American history. *Come Shouting to Zion* is the first comprehensive exploration of the processes by which this remarkable transition occurred. Using an extraordinary array of archival sources, Sylvia Frey and Betty Wood chart the course of religious conversion from the transference of traditional African religions to the New World through the growth of Protestant Christianity in the American South and British Caribbean up to 1830. *Come Shouting to Zion* depicts religious transformation as a complex reciprocal movement involving black and white Christians. It highlights the role of African American preachers in the conversion process and demonstrates the extent to which African American women were responsible for developing distinctive ritual patterns of worship and divergent moral values within the black spiritual community. Finally, the book sheds light on the ways in which, by serving as a channel for the assimilation of Western culture into the slave quarters, Protestant Christianity helped transform Africans into African Americans.

Imaginatively conceived and exhaustively researched." *Journal of American History* "Frey and Wood have done a wonderful service to scholars of American religious history." *Virginia Quarterly* "[The authors have a] passionate commitment to presenting the enslaved as historical actors in their own right." *Journal of Southern History* "A well-researched and valuable book [that] should help to change the scholarly conversation about early African-American religion." *William Mary Quarterly* "[Tells of] the mass conversion of African-Americans to Protestantism in the eighteenth century with admirable clarity and humanity." *Times Literary Supplement* "The authors have a" passionate commitment to presenting the enslaved as historical actors in their own right." *Journal of Southern History* "A well-researched and valuable book "that" should help to change the scholarly conversation about early African-American religion." *William Mary Quarterly* "Tells of" the mass conversion of African-Americans to Protestantism in the eighteenth century with admirable clarity and humanity." *Times Literary Supplement* "The best and most fully informed survey of the rise of black religion in the American south and the West Indies.--*Journal of the American Academy of Religion* Contributes to our understanding of how human survival relies upon the resilient and malleable nature of culture and how oppressed people confront the complex juxtaposition of racial submission and racial equality in the conversion process.--*North Carolina Historical* [Tells of] the mass conversion of African-Americans to Protestantism in the eighteenth century. . . . with admirable clarity and humanity.--*Times Literary Supplement* Provides a lively, masterful account of this decisive American experience.--*Maryland Historical Magazine* Imaginatively conceived and exhaustively researched, *Come Shouting to Zion* is an important new

contribution to African American religious history.--Journal of American HistoryThe richness of the source material on which Frey and Wood draw makes this a particularly enjoyable book to read.--Journal of Interdisciplinary HistoryRemarkable and significant. . . . Highly recommended.--ChoiceA remarkable achievement. Through their clearly written, yet marvelously nuanced argument, Frey and Wood convey the dialectical process by which slave societies gave birth to a new religion.--Georgia Historical QuarterlyA useful synthesis of both recent and older work on the interactions between people of African descent and Christianity.--Religious Studies A well-researched and valuable book. . . . [that] should help to change the scholarly conversation about early African-American religion.--William Mary QuarterlyAfrican people did not begin their encounter with Europeans as Christians, and yet, by the time of the general emancipation, Christianity had become a centerpole of black life in the British Caribbean and the American South. *Come Shouting to Zion* explains this great passage, and in the process provides insight into one of the great transitions in the history of the Americas. It is a work of originality, power, and significance.--Ira Berlin, University of Maryland at College ParkIn this engrossing, well-researched book, [the authors] offer a sweeping overview of African American religion in the South and the Caribbean in the years before 1830. . . . Future scholars . . . will appreciate their clarity, their breadth of vision, and their passionate commitment to presenting the enslaved as historical actors in their own right.--Journal of Southern HistoryA fascinating comparative study on conversion experience. . . . Frey and Wood have done a wonderful service to scholars of American religious history by placing in one text a plethora of examples of black/white contributions to present day Evangelical piety.--Virginia Quarterly From the Inside FlapAn exploration of the conversion of African-born slaves to Protestant Christianity, a reciprocal movement involving black and white Christians.