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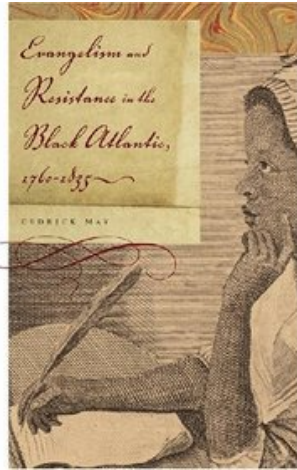
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Cedric May. *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic, 1760–1835*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008. 157 pp. ISBN 9780820327983. Reviewed by Lincoln Mullen for the *Journal of Southern Religion*.

In *Evangelism and Resistance in the Black Atlantic*, Cedric May explores the relationship between blacks' Christian faith and their efforts to resist slavery and racial oppression. He asks whether Christianity was a tool used by whites to enslave blacks, or was it a means that blacks used to resist oppression. His answer comes by examining the literary texts written by blacks who were evangelical Christians in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The six authors that May studies are Jupiter Hammon, Phillis Wheatley, John Marrant, Prince Hall, Richard Allen, and Maria Stewart.

These six authors, according to May, carried on a conversation over nearly a century about Christianity and resistance. By pointing out the connections between the authors, such as Hammon's literary response to Wheatley's poems and the Masonic lodge where Hall and Marrant were both members, May establishes this long conversation. He also demonstrates a progression in the conversation from religious ideas favored by whites to the development of distinct black theologies and religious institutions.

"For each of the authors, May identifies the connection between religion and resistance in their writings."

For each of the authors, May identifies the connection between religion and resistance in their writings. Jupiter Hammon rebuked Wheatley for her outspokenness, arguing that Christianity should lead slaves to accept their status and see that God had used it to provide for their conversion.

Wheatley was more outspoken about resistance, criticizing both slavery and the British empire in her poetry. John Marrant's narrative of his conversion and ordination records how he preached Christianity to slaves, despite the objections of their masters. Unlike white evangelists, though, Marrant refrained from arguing that Christianity would domesticate slaves, and instead offered a rationale for evangelism that did not preclude resistance. Prince Hall and Richard Allen carried developing ideas about resistance to the point of creating separate black institutions, Hall by founding a black Masonic lodge in Boston, and Allen by founding a black church in Philadelphia. Maria Stewart expanded the discussion to the question of gender as well as race discrimination.

"May is therefore able to understand the writers on their own terms, rather than filtering their texts through the values and preoccupations of later generations."

The chief virtues of May's book stem from his willingness to take the religion of these authors seriously. Unlike other writers about black resistance, May does not dismiss Hammon for advocating nonresistance or

Marrant for seldom mentioning slavery. May is therefore able to understand the writers on their own terms, rather than filtering their texts through the values and preoccupations of later generations. Though some other scholars have discounted some of these writers for not articulating resistance in as loudly as, say, David Walker did, May is able to detect more subtle forms of resistance, in theology or ethics rather than just in overt political acts. May is also able to deal with a broader range of authors—men and women, Calvinists and Methodists and Baptists.

The book is short, so May does not deal with his texts at great length; as much of the text is taken up with background as it is with exposition. Sometimes the book reads like the dissertation that it once was, and the outline of the argument is not as clear as could be desired. Since May deals exclusively with authors who wrote primarily in North America or Great Britain, the phrase "black Atlantic" in the title seems a bit of a stretch. Still, because of his willingness to take religion seriously, May's work is a more expansive study of black resistance than earlier works.

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