

# THEN & NOW

## Religion of the First African Slaves

Many Slaves came from The Kingdom of the Kongo in West Africa which had converted to Catholicism in 1491. Examples of African Religions :

1. *"...virtually all Africans believed that the spirits in men and women lived on after death...Dying is "going home"*
2. *"Africans widely believed that humans were originally immortal."*
3. *"Many myths suggest that God sent two messages to earth: a fast animal carried the message of life and a slow one the message of death. In all cases, a particular act on the part of the fast moving animal upset what seems to have been the apparent intention of God...  
God ... arranged the race, but the implication is that the animals had free will."*
4. *"There is a 2<sup>nd</sup> and very different African tradition, this one much like the Biblical one, in which it is told "that God forbade the first people to eat either a certain fruit, or eggs, or animals when they ate this forbidden food, death came to them."*
5. *"African societies value the continuity of human life, from one generation to another and the social solidarity created by marriage and the bonds of kinship."*

In many regions in the 17<sup>th</sup> Century the only area of social interaction with Whites that Slaves were allowed to pursue was religion. One of the first institutions that began to blend the two cultures was the Church. The Churches maintained and nurtured the religious teaching of Christianity that "all men are created equal."

In some Churches, Africans not only were in the congregations but were active in the Church's operation including Preaching to congregations made up of Blacks and Whites.

This assimilation of Religions came to an end in the late 17<sup>th</sup> Century because of the need for cheap slave labor to produce tobacco and cotton.

***To justify what they were doing the White Slave Owners created and promoted the belief that African Slaves were genetically inferior and thus their religious beliefs could not be assimilated with Christianity. To support this claim they relied on people like.***

George Fitzhugh an intellectual and lawyer who in 1854 wrote that Slavery in the South was justified because it relieved the Africans from cruel Slavery in Africa. He wrote:

*"Slavery is a form, and the very best form of Socialism"*

*Is someone today saying that American Descendants of African Slaves need the Government and its Leaders to Protect, and Insure that They are Cared for?*

***If so ,Who?***

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