

Joseph Evans. *Reconciliation and Reparation: Preaching Economic Justice*. Valley Forge: Judson Press, 2018. 160 pages. \$18.99.

The Rev. Dr. Joseph Evans is Dean of the Morehouse School of Religion. In this current volume, he continues his project on the Du Boisian prophetic hermeneutic and its role in biblical interpretation and preaching. *Reconciliation and Reparation* continues themes familiar to those schooled in Pan-African intellectual resources, particularly the Négritude Movement and Marxist diasporic political philosophy.

In the most general terms, Evans attempts to locate contemporary African American preaching in this Pan-African political stream by means of the Du Boisian construct of double consciousness, or “two-ness.” His thesis is simple: “Effective twenty-first century preaching is prophetic when it addresses closing the income and wealth gap” (4).

One of the primary obstacles to this task is the precise double-consciousness (both American and Negro) that thwarts the embrace of an overarching narrative that places African American preachers in the meta-narrative of global liberation efforts and movements. The overarching Eurocentric meta-narrative of cultural progress is almost constantly at odds with the liberation narrative of Pan-Africanism. “The Du Boisian meta-narrative...is rooted in the black subject and is informed by an aesthetic that describes form and function that give shape to other perspectives” (16).

The book is organized in two main sections. “Part 1: Foundations” is devoted to defining the Du Boisian prophetic tradition, connecting that double-consciousness to the Poor People’s Campaign and economic issues, and then nesting the American civil rights struggle within the Pan-African liberation struggle and narrative. Evans hints at a discussion of the theological meaning of reconciliation in this section, starting to tease out the significance of the bookkeeping metaphor that requires a balancing or reckoning.

For students of African American and Pan-African history, this section sings with the work of Molefi Kete Asante, Wyatt Tee Walker, Henry Louis Gates, E. Franklin Frazier, and C. Eric Lincoln; “For too long the Eurocentric narrative has reinforced the obscure notion that people of African descent do not deserve economic equality” (28). The purpose of these chapters is to provide for an intellectual conversion to a radicalized consciousness. The black struggle is the source of the Du Boisian narrative: “Black power is an autonomous alternative to Eurocentrism” (33).

The last part of this section surveys the Pan-African global context with special attention to Alan Boesak and the Accra Confession of the World Communion of Reformed Churches. The struggle, asserts Evans, is a shared struggle with other populations of color: “This condition is global, reinforced by Eurocentrism and its Eurocentric narrative, the catalyst of neo-liberalism. Therefore, a different narrative must emerge, a narrative that we have come to know as a pan-African liberation narrative” (55).

“Part 2: Preaching for Economic Justice,” is further divided into the liberation/reparation themes in both testaments. Evans examines the theological notion of reconciliation as a specifically economic matter, starting with an extended quotation from King’s “I Have a Dream” speech which uses banking metaphors of “cash a check” and a defaulted “promissory note.” The author asserts throughout that King’s use of banking metaphors and his paradigm shift toward labor and work supports a call for economic justice. The strongest parts of this section for

preachers are the extended discussion of Exod 12:38 in which the Israelites “plundered the Egyptians” and reframing the dominant biblical narrative as resistance against the Empire.

The final discussions of Thomas Jefferson as a case study/thought experiment in reconciliation and reparation were less compelling. Some will not agree with Evans that Christian conversion and a belief in miracles is necessary for human transcendence that leads to transformation. The imaginary deathbed scene (surrounded by his free children and his slave children) is brilliant, though.

While Ta-Nehisi Coates’s work is mentioned, it is not figural. Bernie Sanders hovers at the margins. There aren’t many women or much room for gender analysis, and this writer kept hoping for a discussion of Angela Davis’s classic *Women, Race & Class*.

Ultimately, this is a powerful book for those dedicated to global racial justice. Evans does heavy lifting to bring so many different voices together to bear on the timely topic. You’ll cheer, take notes, and make reading lists.

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