

threat than that alleged by anti-Catholics. Above all, the war offered Catholics an opportunity to prove their patriotism, which they did by enlisting in large numbers and by showing almost unqualified enthusiasm for the war effort.

Respite was only temporary, as anti-Catholicism was revived in the 1920s with the second Ku Klux Klan. Nordstrom is careful to show, however, that the anti-Catholicism of the KKK, rooted in claims to ethnic and racial supremacy, was less ideologically based than its Progressive-era predecessor. He makes a similar distinction between Progressive-era anti-Catholicism and the brand popularized by Paul Blanshard and others in the mid-twentieth century, which was intellectual rather than ideological.

Nordstrom includes twenty political cartoons that illustrated prevailing anti-Catholic themes in an appendix. These images are worth the proverbial thousand words, though they would have been more effective had they been interspersed throughout the text. Still, his fine book should go a long way toward demonstrating just how pervasive a force anti-Catholicism has been in American life, especially during this formative period in U.S. history.

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***W. E. B. Du Bois: American Prophet.* By Edward J. Blum.**

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The life, thought, and activities of W. E. B. Du Bois have been treated from many angles by scholars in a range of disciplines. Du Bois has been variously labeled a “social scientist,” “cultural pluralist,” “black nationalist,” “Pan-Africanist,” “Marxist,” “poet,” and “scholar-activist.” Interestingly enough, Edward J. Blum, a professor of History at San Diego State University, breaks sharply with the usual patterns of scholarship on Du Bois, suggesting that this figure is best understood in the role of “prophet.” Such a claim seems almost impossible to sustain under careful scrutiny, but Blum confidently makes his case while challenging us to view Du Bois’s religious life and spiritual temperament from an innovative and more realistic perspective.

Blum actually goes beyond scholars like Don Hufford and Phil Zuckerman, who have explored Du Bois’s thought and writings on religion, to provide essentially “a new analysis of Du Bois’s place in American religious history” (7). Blum argues that the many religious themes and biblical references in Du Bois’s published writings, lectures, and unpublished sources indicate that he

was not only one of the nation's greatest religious thinkers, but also one who put faith to the service of his opposition to social evils such as racism, materialism, and war and human destruction. The contention that Du Bois was a genuinely religious figure with a "relationship to faith, belief, religious organizations, and notions of the sacred" (7) is enlightening indeed, and perhaps even shocking to some, especially given the widely held image of Du Bois as one who was not at all religious in the sense of black Christian commitment.

In the introduction to his work, Blum challenges the reader to "rethink" portraits of Du Bois as a secular figure who flirted with agnosticism and atheism. The author clearly feels that Du Bois was a prophet, but what was his connection to the traditions of ethical prophecy that stretch back to biblical figures like Amos, Jeremiah, Hosea, and Isaiah? Blum does not answer this question sufficiently, and this will undoubtedly render his treatment of Du Bois in the sacred prophetic sense problematic for some biblical and religious scholars, to say the least. After all, Du Bois, unlike the ancient Hebrew prophets, did not consciously see himself as a prophet, as a mouthpiece for God, or as some dynamic, God-sent figure who urged his nation to seek God and not evil in the face of the coming judgment.

In chapter 1, Du Bois's own self-understanding as one whose life was "enmeshed in religious beliefs and organizations" (20) is discussed at considerable length. Du Bois is treated as one who took great pride in his religious heritage and the church experiences of his youth, and who exposed himself to revivals from the time he matriculated at Fisk University in Nashville, Tennessee. Du Bois's distaste for church orthodoxy is highlighted, along with his conflicts with black church leadership, his sense of the need for a reformed black church, and his scathing critique of white Christianity. Much of the appeal of this chapter lies in Blum's tendency to let Du Bois speak for himself on so many issues of a religious nature.

Chapter 2 addresses DuBois's assault on the ethos and structures of white supremacy, largely through his scholarship and, more specifically, in his *The Souls of Black Folk* (1903). Characterizing Du Bois as a prophet of radical racial reform, Blum explains how this towering figure sought to undermine and refute theories of white supremacy through painstaking research and scholarship on the richness and vitality of black religion, music, and culture. The pivotal importance of spirituality in this profound intellectual quest is carefully underscored.

The third chapter is critical for grasping Du Bois's concept of the ideal church as rooted in the teachings and example of Jesus Christ. Here Du Bois's role as a theological thinker and cultural critic emerges in powerful ways, and so does his interest in and call for a renewal of Christianity around the questions of human rights and racial inclusiveness. Also, Du Bois's thoughts on the ambivalent side of the black church and black

religion, taking into account both their weaknesses and redeeming features, are prominently revealed. Clearly, Du Bois felt that the black church was considerably closer to the ideal of “true Christianity” than its white counterpart.

The fourth chapter is actually a provocative discussion of how Du Bois employed biblical symbolism in addressing cycles of racial violence. Interestingly enough, the biblical account of Christ and his crucifixion, according to Blum, provided a powerful core of images to aid Du Bois in penetrating “the inner workings of faith, race, and violence in American society” (137). Blum declares that in this regard, Du Bois stood in a long tradition of African American thought.

In the final chapter, Blum highlights the last two decades of Du Bois’s life, viewing them as a period during which Du Bois continued to oppose “the dominant trends in American religion and culture that upheld structures of oppression” (183). Blum insists that Du Bois remained relevant as a religious thinker and symbol despite his expressed Communist sympathies. As Du Bois was increasingly isolated by the ruling elite, Blum concludes, he not only associated Communism with Christianity but also availed himself of the most positive resources of the church and its leadership. In other words, churches and church leaders “became indispensable to Du Bois” as an emotional and political refugee (189).

In the epilogue, Blum writes about “The Passing of a Prophet.” Du Bois’s death and funeral are discussed, and so is his legacy of scholarship and social activism. Attention is also given to Du Bois’s spiritual legacy. A greater tribute to the man cannot be found, even in the works of the most seasoned Du Bois scholars.

Blum’s very well-written, well-documented book is full of rich information and hard insights. It should have special appeal for scholars and students in a range of disciplines, and especially in African American history, cultural studies, and American religion.

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*Evangelical From the Beginning: The Story of the Evangelical Congregational Church.* Edited by **Terry Heisey**. Lexington, Ky.: Emeth, 2006. 381 pp. \$24.50 cloth; \$19.00 paper.

The Evangelical Congregational Church traces its roots to Jacob Albright, a German immigrant caught in the American wave of Methodist excitement