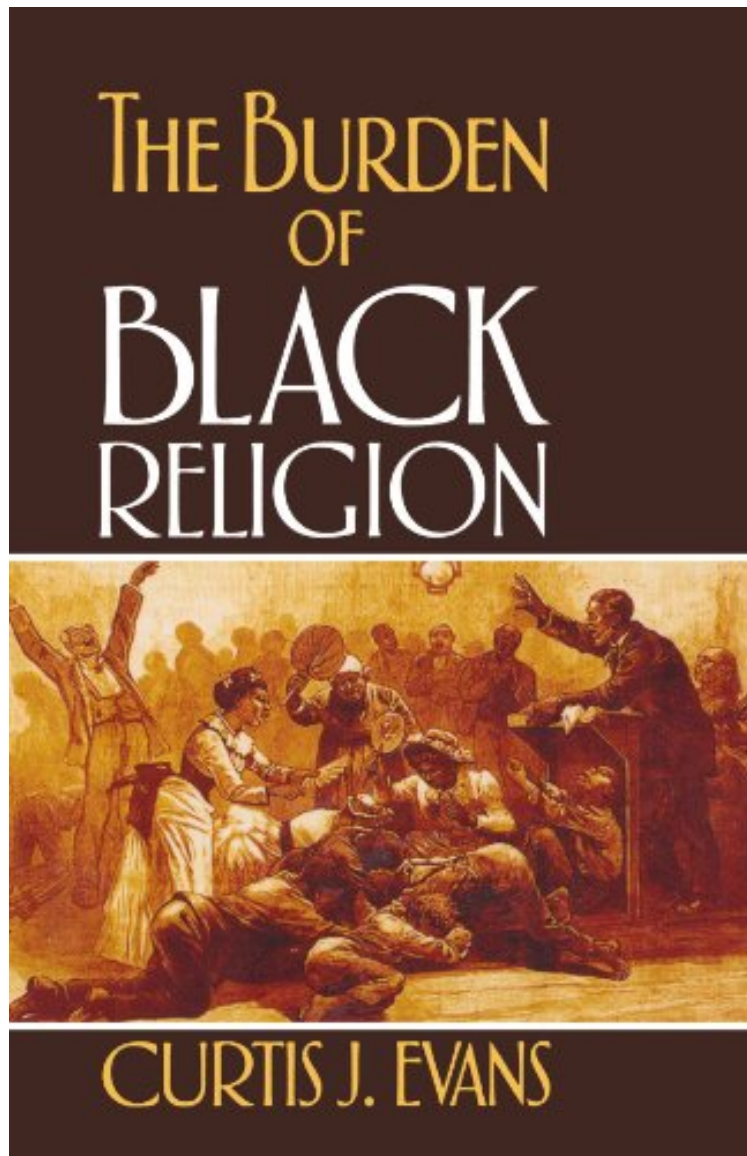


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The Burden of Black Religion

Curtis J. Evans

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1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A must read!By P. E. HallIf you are interested in Black Religion and you've read Robertau, then you need to read The Burden of Black Religion. I'm still making my way through the text, and I am glad for the purchase. More to come on the entire read.....

Religion has always been a focal element in the long and tortured history of American ideas about race. In *The Burden of Black Religion*, Curtis Evans traces ideas about African American religion from the antebellum period to the middle of the twentieth century. Central to the story, he argues, was the deep-rooted notion that blacks were somehow "naturally" religious. At first, this assumed natural impulse toward religion served as a signal trait of black people's humanity -- potentially their unique contribution to American culture. Abolitionists seized on this point, linking black religion to the black capacity for freedom. Soon, however, these first halting steps toward a multiracial democracy were reversed. As Americans began to value reason, rationality, and science over religious piety, the idea of an innate black religiosity was used to justify preserving the inequalities of the status quo. Later, social scientists -- both black and white -- sought to reverse the damage caused by these racist ideas and in the process proved that blacks were in fact fully capable of incorporation into white American culture. This important work reveals how interpretations of black religion played a crucial role in shaping broader views of African Americans and had real consequences in their lives. In the process, Evans offers an intellectual and cultural history of race in a crucial period of American history.

"This important book offers a fresh and provocative take on the manner in which religion has been used to frame and shape the place and function of African Americans within the United States in particular as well as the creation of the nation in more general terms. The challenges this book offers are vital. I highly recommend it." --Anthony B. Pinn, Rice University, author of *Terror and Triumph: The Nature of Black Religion* "Marvelously meticulous." --Church History "The Burden of Black Religion is a very rich and rewarding book. . . It certainly bears repeated readings and in these times when religion in general has attained the spotlight it can be profitably read for understanding how African Americans have created, expressed, and conducted their religious experience. In the end, one can only hope that America can eventually come to embrace the spiritual multicultural diversity that is embedded within its history, especially that of African Americans." --Journal of Social History "[Evans] offers a substantial engagement of black religion that covers primarily the period after the Civil War through the 1940s with tenuous continuing conversation about the implications for the Civil Rights Movement and beyond." --Religious Studies About the Author Curtis J. Evans is Assistant Professor of the History of Christianity, University of Chicago Divinity School.