



Blacks and Whites in Christian America: How Racial Discrimination Shapes Religious Convictions (Religion and Social Transformation)

Jason E. Shelton, Michael O. Emerson

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2012 Winner of the C. Calvin Smith Award presented by the Southern Conference on African American Studies, Inc.

2014 Honorable Mention for the Distinguished Book Award presented by the American Sociological Association's Sociology of Religion Section

Conventional wisdom holds that Christians, as members of a “universal” religion, all believe more or less the same things when it comes to their faith. Yet black and white Christians differ in significant ways, from their frequency of praying or attending services to whether they regularly read the Bible or believe in Heaven or Hell.

In this engaging and accessible sociological study of white and black Christian beliefs, Jason E. Shelton and Michael O. Emerson push beyond establishing that there are racial differences in belief and practice among members of American Protestantism to explore why those differences exist. Drawing on the most comprehensive and systematic empirical analysis of African American religious actions and beliefs to date, they delineate five building blocks of black Protestant faith which have emerged from the particular dynamics of American race relations. Shelton and Emerson find that America’s history of racial oppression has had a deep and fundamental effect on the religious beliefs and practices of blacks and whites across America.

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