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A REVIEW OF GOD IN THE GHETTO BY WILLIAM AUGUSTUS JONES JR.

INTRODUCTION

Social injustice is one of many issues that blacks encounter in America. There is a big disparity in the distribution of wealth in America. One race delegates themselves to be superior over the other. The system continues to perpetuate racial division to their own advantage. Blacks are denied equal rights for education and healthcare. The question is who is speaking out against social injustice. Where are the black churches and why are they not speaking up? In reviewing the book *God in the Ghetto* by William Augustus Jones Jr. I am going to summarize, analyze, critique and show the strengths of this book. I will also talk about my take away from this book and its significance for my ministry.

SUMMARY

In this book, Dr. Jones' aim is to point out the evil that is propagated by the system which is known as the ghetto. His purpose for writing the book is to bring awareness to people in the world that Americas' system is flawed, when it comes to how they treat blacks in America. Each chapter in this book comes together to show how white supremacy has dominated America for many years. Dr. Jones talks about the system as the American trinity of capitalism, racism and militarism. He alludes to the fact that racism is perpetuated by the system. Blacks are facing injustice everyday and they are treated with disdain. According to Dr. Jones, blacks in America are denied access to the tree of life. Racism being the major cause of bitterness and hatred in America. Skin color is the determinant of which race has power over the other. White supremacists continue to oppress the blacks in America.

The objective of this book is to deconstruct the constitution and their racist deeds. Dr. Jones talks about life in the ghetto where blacks are poverty stricken. Ruled by a system that seems to portray equality for all, yet it is so deadly, riddled with the poison of hatred . Inequality and injustice is at the root of their leadership. Dr. Jones also talks about slavery in America and how it was justified by the system. In his words, the system did not consider blacks as humans. In this book, Dr. Jones points out five types of aberrations, physical, psycho spiritual, cultural, economic and legal, all contributing to the impoverished living of the blacks in America's ghetto. While the system has sought to divide and annihilate blacks in America, the involvement of racist religions helps to keep the fire burning on racism. The White churches sanctioned the oppression of blacks in America. Dr. Jones is of the opinion that the black churches should confront the system, and speak up for social justice on behalf of the blacks in America.

ANALYSIS

As we look at the construct of *God in the Ghetto*, it is clear that this book was written for the younger generation of blacks as well as whites in America. In my opinion, the writing style in this book is quite suitable for this audience. The historical content that Dr. Jones provided in this book is very helpful for the younger generation who were not present at the time of slavery. It gives them a picture of how their ancestors had to deal with racism while they fight for justice. It is through this lens that Dr. Jones brings awareness to his audience by showing them how it is still prevalent today. He argues that Americas' system is made up so that blacks can be inferior. He stated, "The System reveals a sick sociology based on a faulty anthropology which emanates from a false theology." (p.31). Over the years, America has become deeply segregated. Blacks are not allowed the same privileges as whites. Dr. Jones stated, "In spite of the deathblow that

has been dealt to legal segregation, the basic institutions of American society remain sharply segregated..”(p.34). Dr. Jones also argues that the ghetto is not a place but the system that rules the country. In order to strengthen this argument, He states, “At rock bottom the ghetto is a non-geographic entity, a social perimeter of pain determined by pigmentation,” (p.37) . In his view, the ghetto was targeted to a particular race. According to Dr. Jones, the ghetto in America does not exist in isolation. It is experientially related to the people of color in other parts of the world who are inhabitants of the larger ghetto. (p.42). While color differentiation may be part of Americas’ system, Dr. Jones argues that it can be found all over the world. He coined these words, “Color is the chief criterion in defining that almost numberless mass called the third world. (p.46). Dr. Jones talks about how racism has spread within the church community. His main concern throughout this book is the separation of the black and white churches. He continues to explore the idea of how there can be a reconciliation between the two.

STRENGTHS

- 1) Dr. Jones proved to be very knowledgeable about the topic he presents in this book. He provided adequate history so that the reader could become acquainted with the events that took place throughout the years of slavery and beyond. He also showed how white supremacy rules and reigns in America. His arguments in this book were very compelling.
- 2) The sermons in the book are very powerful. It strengthens his argument that the church should get involved in social justice. He showed how social justice preaching can be very effective in getting people to become aware of what is happening in America. His sermon also cause the listeners to think about how they can bring about change.

3) The bible verses used in this book helped illustrate, that the bible does talk about social justice, racism and racial inequality. Jesus was concerned about the poor and how they were treated. We are told in the bible to make provision for the poor and the needy. Dr. Jones uses these verses very brilliantly to show how there is a dichotomy between what America professes about being founded on God and how America treats God's people.

CRITIQUE

Although this book can be used as a tool for teaching about racial injustice, In my opinion Dr. Jones may have been a little too critical of the black churches. He made the argument that black churches fail to exercise their prophetic function. He said, "Judgment is upon them for failure to act in terms of their freedom." (p.100). I will argue that not all black churches have the gift of prophetic preachers. While social justice preaching is very beneficial in raising awareness about racial injustice, I believe that the preacher must be gifted in that area. Some preachers may be able to develop the art of social justice preaching like Dr. Jones but in my opinion, this is not one size fits all. God will not judge on something that he did not equip you with. Dr Jones also stated, "The Black preacher unfortunately, is often a hindrance to the advancement of Black cause." (p.100). This statement may be true in some ways, but I believe that it can not be generalized for all black preachers. Most preachers believe that their duty is to preach the word of God only. I agree that they can all get more involved in social justice issues outside of the church, but this is something that would happen overnight. In my opinion, Black preachers would have to be taught the art of social justice preaching. I also believe that the teaching will have to be over a period of time for it to be effective. Black preachers would need to understand that they have to step out of the comfort zone and confront the system.

This book is very useful to the audience that it is intended for. It addresses the topic that is on hand. It gives sufficient information to the reader, so that he/she gets a full understanding of the topic. The arguments in this book are fully supported by biblical references. The book can be used to teach the younger generation about the history of racism and racial injustice. It can also help pastors and preachers understand the importance of educating the congregation in the black churches about standing up against systemic racism.

TAKEAWAYS

The first thing that I took away from this book about the urban poor is that they are oppressed by the white supremacists. They are dehumanized and demeaned in the worst possible way. The urban poor are looked down upon by the system. White supremacists continue to control the urban poor in America. Whites are still enjoying better privileges than urban poor. The White churches were the ones that created and perpetuated racism in the urban poor communities. There is a large disparity in the wealth between the urban poor and the whites. In the urban poor communities you can find poor housing, underemployment and overcrowding. The urban poor are more likely than the whites to succumb to poor health conditions.

My second takeaway from this book is that the urban poor in America struggle with standing up and speaking out against racial inequality. There is a need for the urban poor to step up and confront the system. They cannot sit down and accept oppression from the white supremacist. The fight for justice must continue, even if it means being put into prison or death. They have to let the system know that we must be treated fairly. Fighting for equality should always be in the forefront of the minds of urban poor in America. The urban poor must understand that if they do not confront the system, racism will continue to remain prevalent in America.

Another takeaway from this book is that the church has to bring God into the ghetto. They must let the ghetto system know that the God we serve can deliver. He does not sanction inequality. He is a God that stands for justice. The urban church cannot fail to deal with the system. They have to raise awareness of social injustice among the urban poor. The black preacher cannot just stay behind the pulpit, they have to go outside with the people and fight for justice. The church has to speak up on behalf of the urban poor.

SIGNIFICANCE FOR MY MINISTRY

Reading the book *God in the Ghetto*, I have gained a wealth of knowledge on racism and social injustice in America. I would apply the knowledge I have learnt from this book by first bringing awareness to the people in my ministry, by talking to them about racism and racial inequality in America. I believe that if we teach the people, they would be better equipped to fight the system. I will use this book to improve my knowledge about how to function as a collective body, to stand up and fight for equal rights for the blacks in America. I am also going to implement a group in my church that will be responsible for going into the community and learning more about the social justice issues that they are facing. This group will go outside of the church and stand with the people that are protesting for social justice. They are going to confront the system that oppressed the poor and the marginalized. As a preacher, I plan to start practicing prophetic preaching so that I would be able to open up the eyes of the people about social issues that need to be dealt with. I am going to use the power I have in the pulpit to speak up about how God can be in the ghetto which is known as the system. I am not going to turn my back on those that need me, I will stand up and fight with them for the right cause.

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WORK CITED

Jones, Jr. William Augustus, *God in the Ghetto, Prophetic Word Revisited*
Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA, Edited by Jennifer Jones Austin

