



Prophesy Deliverance!

Cornel West

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In this, his premiere work, Cornel West provides readers with a new understanding of the African American experience based largely on his own political and cultural perspectives borne out of his own life's experiences. He challenges African Americans to consider the incorporation of Marxism into their theological perspectives, thereby adopting the mindset that it is class more so than race that renders one powerless in America. Armed with a new introduction by the author, this Twentieth Anniversary Edition of *Prophesy Deliverance!* is a must have.

Prophesy Deliverance! Details

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Author : Cornel West

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David Christian says

I wanted to give this a higher rating. I'm sympathetic to West's project of starting a dialogue between African American liberation theology and the anti-authoritarian strains of Marxism but as I read it became increasingly obvious that, at least in the subject of Marxism, he was sloppy and ill informed.

Chris says

Those who have had Cornel West as their teacher never forget him. For the rest of us, this book is as close as we get to the West of the classroom. We watch him posing questions, opening up problems by typologies, bringing his students immense intellectual distances in a short time, and making it all look easy.

The core argument here is about the roots of White supremacy; the core narrative, about African-Americans' political response to that ideology. West is an independent leftist, beholden to no party or theory: He draws on Foucault, various Marxisms, and most of all (though not always overtly) on the prophetic insight of Black Christians into their spiritual situation. The book makes a terrific conversation-starter. As a scholar, I want something meatier, more complete; but as a teacher, I can't ask for a more inspiring model.

Much of what's in here was West's half of a course, co-taught at Union Theological Seminary with James Cone, on Black theology and Marxism. I mention that, not simply to toot my school's horn, but to explain this book's striking aporias. West is presupposing that you know a particular telling of Black theology and history, represented by Cone's essays of the late '70s and early '80s (if you need something in book form, try *God of the Oppressed* or *For My People*) and Gayraud Wilmore's *Black Religion and Black Radicalism*.

shay says

a decent book although he takes a really long time to get to the point and at the end doesn't offer much in way of actual solutions. but an interesting read none-the-less.

Drick says

This is Cornel West's first book and lays out a perspective that has informed his writing over the last three decades even as that perspective has changed and matured. He gives a brilliant overview of Marxism, Prophetic Christianity, radical African American politics, and the influence of Western Culture on all of them. In typical West fashion, he says a bundle in each sentence, so this is not a quick or easy read. However, it is a great introduction to Black Liberation theology from a perspective of someone other than James Cone.

Nicholas Bobbitt says

This is a really interesting look into how Christianity effects African Americans' world.

Ebadur says

I just finally got to finish Cornel West's *Prophesy Deliverance*. I recommend it and would like to share the following quote from the near the end:

“The genius of King's civil rights movement was that it seized upon the newly felt sense of black triumph of political liberalism within the belly of the segregated South, thereby sending progressive ripples throughout the country which culminated in the unleashing of the multifarious possibilities immanent in political liberalism for all Americans. The civil rights movement succeeded primarily because of the talent, skill, and courage of the civil rights activists, its pronounced black cultural potency (rooted in black southern churches), and the rising tide of political liberalism facilitated by an expanding American economy (at home and abroad). In dialectical fashion, this success both rested upon its initial liberal impetus and dealt the deathblow to political liberalism.

The ineluctable shortsightedness of the civil rights movement was that its leaders could not transcend political liberalism. The more the movement achieved its aims, the more convinced they became of the virtues of liberalism. Yet, as the successes of the movement unfolded, the impotency of liberalism in the face of structural unemployment and class inequality became more apparent. Nevertheless, post-civil rights leaders clung to the rhetoric of liberalism. This was seen most clearly in their support of the last pillar of the first major framework of the Afro-American liberation movement – the affirmation of the liberal capitalist vision of society – which remained a tacit presupposition of their perspective. Even the early years of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC), a radical breakaway from King's Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) - as well as its religion counterpart, the National Committee of Black Churchmen (NCBC), did not reject this presupposition.

The genius of Malcolm X was that he understood that political liberalism could not deliver what it promised (namely, Afro-American freedom), that he articulated his wholesale rejection of liberalism in language intelligible to the Afro-American masses, and that he acknowledged that the new black vision of society had to be informed by the anticolonial struggles occurring around the world. The tragedy of Malcolm X (similar to that of King) was that he did not live long enough to project this new black vision of society. Unlike King, he precluded capitalism (and any version thereof) as a possibility, but he never unequivocally affirmed the socialist vision that was later put forward by his most notable legates, the Black Panther Party and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers. Malcolm X is the transitional figure who stands between King and the black Marxists, between black liberalism and black socialist nationalism. My hunch is that his religious sensibilities (absent in his major legates), black cultural sentiments, moral convictions, political consciousness, and personal engagement would have evolved into revolutionary Islamic perspective and praxis closely similar to the viewpoint put forward in this book.” - pg 142-144

Shay Gabriel says

The most academic/dense of Cornel West's books, written before he became the public figure he is today. If

his fame has caused anyone to doubt his strong intellectual foundation, this book should remove those doubts.

West lays out his religious-political program thoroughly, pulling from Marxism, Christianity and the Black American experience. He deftly explains both Marxism's failures from a Christian perspective and the necessity of its economic analysis. This is a philosophic theology from the best Black prophetic tradition, and a vital read for those interested in theology, liberation, and leftist thought.

Diane says

It seems like it was his college dissertation written in 1980. Since I read it in 2012, it needed an update for the past thirty years. It is basically an explanation of his religious and political views. He thinks liberal Christianity and a certain type of communism combined is the best hope for the world.
