

# [Cornel west considers what marxism and christianity theology religion](https://assignbuster.com/cornel-west-considers-what-marxism-and-christianity-theology-religion/)

In Prophesy Deliverance, Cornel West considers what Marxism and Christianity might derive by prosecuting in duologue. West feels that, while these traditions do hold cardinal dissensions, both can gain from such a duologue. More specifically, he feels that a radical Christianity informed by Marxist idea and founded on historical black divinity can be a powerful force against racism. With this in head, West evaluates the history of race and racism as he builds towards a Christianity informed by progressive Marxism.

West begins by researching the seeds of Afro-american Christianity. He argues that American strains of Christianity, such as those of the Baptist churchs and the Methodist churchs, appealed to American slaves for their accent on human equality before God. But this does non wholly explicate the acceptance of Christianity. West agrees with Nietzsche that Christianity is a faith suited for the oppressed. And so the subjugation of American slaves was a cardinal factor in the outgrowth of Christianity in Afro-american civilization.

Having traced the class of Christianity in Afro-american civilization through history, West turns his attending to white domination and racism. He argues that white domination is a cardinal facet of philosophical modernism, with the primacy it gives to scientific enterprises and empirical observation. West believes that this primacy of course gives birth to the objectification of human existences. This objectification, in bend, gives birth to a hierarchal rank of distinguishable races with which humanity is classified.

White domination had its beginnings when the European Enlightenment took for its criterions of beauty and truth those of classical, Grecian civilization. These criterions did non aline with those held exterior of Europe. Europeans interpreted this as an indicant of lower status. Simultaneously, inspired by the Scientific Revolution, Europeans began to sort human existences utilizing discernible standards such as skin colour. This, West contends, is where the initial nexus was made between race and lower status. Merely Europeans imitated Grecian civilization, and so merely Europeans were judged to be maximally first-class. Further, Europeans were, in the strategy that developed, entirely white. So merely Whites could be judged maximally first-class. It is here that the foundations of white domination were laid down. White domination became entrenched with the outgrowth of pseudo-scientific Fieldss such as phrenology. West does non asseverate that these Fieldss ‘ position as pseudoscience was the primary cause. He does non believe the scientific mistakes blighting the likes of phrenology are of import. Alternatively, West argues the genuinely of import item is that Europeans became positive human character could be predicted from physical features. This impression was at the foundation of every one of these flawed Fieldss. It took an inexplicit white domination and formalized it as an expressed belief.

Following this analysis of racism, West considers the responses given by African-Americans. He identifies four major responses: exceptionalism, assimilationalism, marginalism, and humanitarianism. Exceptionalism, says West, holds African americans superior to at least white Americans. Assimilationalism takes the place straight opposite of exceptionalism, keeping Afro-american society as inferior. West rejects both of these responses, the first as hypocritical and the 2nd as unacceptable. Marginalism rejects both Afro-american and American society as a whole, alternatively stressing creativeness and bing on the borders of society. West admires this position ‘ s attempts to advance individualism and creativeness, but criticizes it as exclusive response in that it is ever attached to either assimilationalism or humanitarianism. Humanism, the position West finally endorses, seeks to understand Afro-american society as it truly is: neither superior nor inferior, but instead a subtle, sophisticated civilization with its alone strengths and failings. ( Just as all civilizations do. )

Traveling on from civilization, West proposes a response to racism composed of Afro-american Christianity and Marxism. He feels that these two cantonments have much to offer any effort to emancipate the laden. That said, he acknowledges that there are cardinal splits between these traditions. West lays out these splits from both sides ‘ position.

As the Marxist review of Christianity, West labels the Christian motion impotent, incorrect, and ill-informed. Impotent for its insisting on a God who is merely effective from outside of history. Incorrect because it accepts this God without valid rational evidences. And ill-informed because it lacks the scientific tool necessary in the analysis of world.

Showing the Christian claims against Marxism, West complains that Marxists are naif, narrow, and near-sighted. Naive for their optimism sing the release of the oppressed from the governing category. Narrow for their sole apprehension of humanity in socioeconomic footings. And near-sighted because they lack a vision for society after capitalist economy, refering themselves entirely with the licking of capitalists in the present.

While West offers each side ‘ s response to the other, these responses are non cardinal to his instance. West does non believe Christians and Marxists need to decide these differences in order to organize a meaningful confederation. Alternatively, these traditions should look to their common involvements: the release of the oppressed. This end is evidently the full point of Marxism. West feels, nevertheless, that it is besides at the bosom of black divinity. Given that both groups seek the same terminal, there is room for cooperation. Further, Christianity and Marxism can complement each other. What Christians lack in scientific motive and political will, Marxists more than compensate for. And where Marxism struggles with rigidness and naivete, Christianity excels. These political orientations are well-suited, so, for a matter-of-fact brotherhood.

Finally, we come to the decision of Prophesy Deliverance: the presentation of a radical Christian religion in duologue with progressive Marxism. This Christian religion is built from four cardinal constituents, each of which West introduced earlier. These constituents are: a dialectic apprehension of history, the divinity of prophetic Christianity, the mentality of Afro-american humanitarianism, and the socioeconomic theory and pattern of progressive Marxism. West concludes by sing the position such a Christian religion might hold in American civilization.

The vision West nowadayss is obliging. A concern one might hold, nevertheless, is with the specificity of this vision. The place developed throughout the book assumes Christianity. At the beginning, this is apprehensible as West gleans a great trade of wisdom from black divinity and the Afro-american Christian tradition. However, the book maintains this particular, Christian focal point. It is non clear how, or even if, one might develop parallels to West ‘ s place outside of the Christian tradition.

This concern is more serious than a simple skip. In his analysis of racism ‘ s beginnings, West identifies two cardinal factors: the scientific thrust to sort worlds into rigorous types combined with differing human ideals and values. West argues these two conditions gave birth to white domination in Europe. These conditions could besides develop with faith, nevertheless. Humanity ‘ s involvement in quantitative, biological categorization has merely increased. And there is no uncertainty that faiths present a broad scope of differing values and ideals. There is nil incorrect with Christianity encompassing a clearly Christian response to racism, like the one offered by West. It is imperative, nevertheless, that the response embraced by each spiritual tradition coexist with the others. Further, a uniting secular response is besides needed. As Leonard Harris has suggested, racism is a & A ; acirc ; ˆ? polymorphic agent of decease & A ; acirc ; ˆA? . It is of import that an attempt against racism guard against farther transmutations. An particularly likely transmutation racism might take is spiritual extremism. Therefore, this is an issue West needs to turn to.

However, there is surely a difference between excluding and rejecting these alternate preparations of radical, prophetic Christianity. Nothing about West ‘ s positions is in any manner hostile to other traditions. Furthermore, nil in Prophesy Deliverance precludes West ‘ s positions from being translated to, state, Islam or secular humanitarianism. These interlingual renditions merely are non provided.

This book is of immediate involvement and pertinence to Christians in the battle against anti-black racism. There is, nevertheless, much of value here for those from different traditions. One may non be able to use West ‘ s penetrations instantly, but there is truth here that may be incorporated into a broad assortment of backgrounds. Possibly the best manner to read Prophesy Deliverance, if the reader does non portion in West ‘ s Christian religion, is to understand it as a contemplation on the lessons learned by African americans as they struggled with bondage and racism. Understood in this sense, no affair your background, West offers an first-class speculation on release from subjugation.