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Paul Harvey

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THROUGH THE STORM, THROUGH THE NIGHT



A HISTORY OF AFRICAN AMERICAN CHRISTIANITY



PAUL HARVEY

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Paul Harvey : Through the Storm, Through the Night: A History of African American Christianity (The African American History Series) before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Through the Storm, Through the Night: A History of African American Christianity (The African American History Series):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An excellent place to start in the study of African American Christianity

By Spencer This brief volume contains six chapters, with a separate introduction and conclusion. The introduction outlines the major themes in African American Religious History, laying the groundwork for the remainder of the volume. Chapter One offers a sweeping overview of African and African American religious experience from the Middle Passage to the Great Awakening; this experience consisted largely of syncretism with a strong dose of opposition of Christianization of slaves by white owners due to concerns it would cause them to desire freedom. The second chapter documents the early stages of Christianity among slaves, which originated in the urban centers of the North and in the slave quarters. The revival of religious interest among residents of the colonies led to the evangelization of slaves and freemen, and the founding of the earliest traditionally black denominations. Chapter Three surveys the thirty or so years before the Civil War. This period included a high degree of revivalistic evangelism of slaves in the South, and the evolution of a distinct theology among slaves which emphasized liberation with an eye toward dual fulfillment in the present and the future. In the fourth chapter, Harvey traces the history of African American Christianity from the end of the Civil War to the dawn of the Twentieth Century. It was during this time that blacks began to identify as African Americans as they sought to find their identity amidst their new freedom. This was also a time when whites in the South began to form laws to restrict the freedom of blacks. African Americans also founded a number of new denominations as they sought to live and worship freely. Chapter Five summarizes the first half of the Twentieth Century. This is a period of time when African Americans began to increasingly migrate northward to urban centers and the church became a powerful social center for those displaced communities. Chapter Six details some of the Civil Rights Movement, shifts toward religious pluralism in some areas, and the continued pursuit of justice in the African American churches. The body of the text concludes with a very brief outline that recaps the volume and makes clear the connection between the prophetic preaching of someone like Jeremiah Wright and the long, dark history of the African American Church. After the epilogue, Harvey provides a number of brief primary source documents that support and illustrate his earlier arguments.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION Through the Storm, Through the Night is far from an exhaustive treatment of the topic, but it provides an excellent entry point into an interesting and important part of Church History. For those seeking to gain a deeper appreciation for Black History, particularly the history of African American Christianity, this would be an excellent starting point. Harvey does what is vital for an introductory volume: he tells a good story and makes the reader want to know more. More significantly, he opens up the conversation on a topic that is only becoming increasingly important. The history of the African American portion of the universal church may well, in future, be a model for public engagement, theological fidelity, and social endurance for others.

NOTE: This is an abbreviated version of a post at Ethics and Culture.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars

By Willia Daniels Very clean pages almost like new good choice. I can make it my own with my own notes.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I enjoyed reading this book

By Nickie Golden I enjoyed reading this book. I learned a tremendous amount about the manner in which slaves were treated. I have great compassion for the work of those who assisted in bring civil rights to this country.

Through the Storm, Through the Night provides a lively overview of the history of African American religion, beginning with the birth of African Christianity amidst the Transatlantic slave trade, and tracing the story through its growth in America. Noted author and historian Paul Harvey illustrates how black Christian traditions provided theological, institutional, and personal strategies for cultural survival during bondage and into an era of partial freedom. At the same time, Harvey covers the ongoing tug-of-war between themes of "respectability" versus practices derived from an African heritage; the adoption of Christianity by the majority of African Americans; and the critique of the adoption of the "white man's religion" from the eighteenth century to the present. The book also covers internal cultural, gendered, and class divisions in churches that attracted congregants of widely disparate educational levels, incomes, and worship styles.

Harvey provides an elegant and engaging introduction to the history of African American Christianity that charts the diversity of experience and expression among black Christians and illuminates the complex relationship between religion and race in American life. (Judith Weisenfeld, Princeton University) If you teach, study, practice, or care about African American religion, then this is the book for you. Paul Harvey provides an indispensable overview of black Christianity from the age of slavery to the ascendance of Obama. With it, Harvey offers a bevy of fascinating primary documents that range from Nat Turner's righteous rage to Mahalia Jackson's soulful songs. Through the Storm, Through the Night does it all with such clarity that even the most complex concepts make sense. (Edward J. Blum, author of *W. E. B. Du Bois, American Prophet*, and *Reforging the White Republic: Race, Religion, and American Nationalism*) Harvey, a professor of history, examines the various roles that Christianity has played in the lives of African Americans. He begins at the very beginning, with Africans stolen from their homes bringing their own religious traditions, including both Christianity and Islam, with them to the Americas. The debate (and the rationalizations) among slave owners and other whites about what conversion to Christianity should mean is discussed as well the role the church played during and after the Civil War. Harvey then continues to the modern day, with an

emphasis on the church's place in the civil rights movement. A leitmotif that threads through the book is the importance of music in African American life and spirituality. The book ends with the dialogue between Barack Obama and his former minister Jeremiah Wright, in which Harvey finds two distinct strands of the black religious experience, 'the righteous jeremiad and the gospel of hope.' The list of primary sources that Harvey appends to the text adds value to what is a solid overview. (Booklist) Harvey (history, Univ. of Colorado, Colorado Springs) traces the development of African American Christianity from the transatlantic slave trade to the 21st-century megachurch, underscoring how the church served as a crucial institution and forum for African Americans in the United States as the country denied them a voice and equality. Not only did the church help African Americans endure and survive during slavery, but it functioned as a catalyst of the Civil Rights Movement. Harvey highlights important byproducts of the African American religious experience as well, e.g., music such as spirituals, gospel, blues, and even rap. He does not shy away from the criticism that African American Christianity has faced, e.g., for its exuberant style and preachers who have been accused of fraudulence. He covers today's religious pluralism, in addition to the rise of black megachurches and the 'prosperity gospel.' VERDICT Harvey's book is a concise and scholarly yet entirely accessible work, appropriate both for interested general readers and students. With charts, a helpful glossary, 'bibliographic essays' on primary and secondary sources, and a time line from 1491 (when the Kingdom of Kongo converted to Christianity) to Barack Obama's 2008 election). (Library Journal) This deceptively slim book covers an enormous amount of historical terrain as an overview of African-American faith in America, touching a staggering number of major developments without exhaustively detailing them. Harvey, a professor of history at the University of Colorado, begins by explaining how the slave trade permanently altered religion for African-Americans, then moves on quickly to how the black church later provided cultural survival strategies. The same colonies that argued that the Bible sanctioned slavery hosted Protestant evangelical revivals where African-American Christianity was born. The book expertly pulls together the individual stories of well-known historical figures whose lives were shaped in black churches, the significance of syncretism in African and Caribbean-based religions as reflections of some elements of Christian theology, and the spread of gospel music as a new and influential part of American popular culture. There are some repetitive passages on Voodoo and Yoruba traditions, but the book is almost entirely a good, rigorous starting point for those unfamiliar with the place of African-American Christianity in America's history. (Publishers Weekly) Books abound on the African American religious experience in the US, but Harvey's work is a welcome addition and succinct summary of its 400-year history. Typically in such short monographs, detail is sacrificed for brevity, but Harvey (history, Univ. of Colorado, Colorado Springs) packs great substance through insightful biographies and aptly summarized historical events. He argues against any uniform African American church or religious experience, as African Americans experienced varied contacts with Christianity and often mixed traditional African spiritualism and animistic beliefs. Unquestionably, religious beliefs infused the African American community with hope as they struggled through slavery, Jim Crow legislation, segregation, race-oriented violence, and the civil rights movement. Harvey concludes that though the church is still relevant and Christian denominations are still predominant in the African American community, 21st-century immigrants continue to challenge this narrative, as the Orisha traditions of West and Central Africans, Cuban Santera, Haitian Catholicism and Voodoo, Ethiopian Eastern Orthodoxy, and Islamic influences further heighten diversity. The author notes that clannish and local community traditions among these immigrants overshadow any presumed unity based on skin color. In summary, Harvey creates a broad panoramic of the African American religious experience and challenges future scholars to increase scholarly attention to this field. Summing Up: Highly recommended. All levels/libraries. (CHOICE) The diversity, complexity and tenacity of the African-American religious experience come alive on Harvey's pages.... Harvey's inclusion of 40 pages of primary sources makes this volume even more valuable for readers interested in an extended encounter with the women and men they meet in *Through the Storm*. (The Christian Century) Focuses on how Africans in America flocked to Protestant Christianity in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, used their faiths to challenge slavery and then racial segregation, and in the twentieth century became more diverse with massive new immigration after 1965. Harvey is able to show both consensus and conflict. (Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly) About the Author Paul Harvey is professor of history at the University of Colorado at Colorado Springs. He is the author of *Redeeming the South: Religious Cultures and Racial Identities Among Southern Baptists, 1865-1925* and *Freedom's Coming: Religious Culture and the Shaping of the South from the Civil War through the Civil Rights Era*.