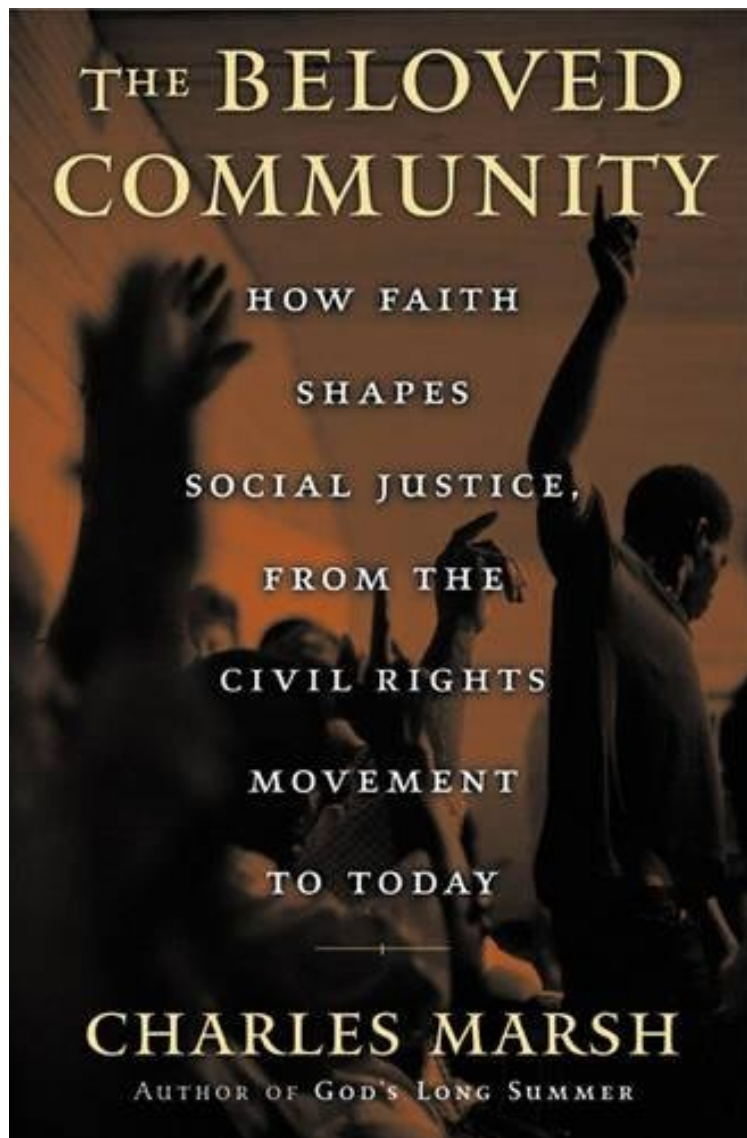


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The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today

Charles Marsh

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Charles Marsh : The Beloved Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Beloved

Community: How Faith Shapes Social Justice from the Civil Rights Movement to Today:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A Beautiful BookBy dr.keithcoxThe authenticity of Christian community in postmodern North America is both of scholarly and personal (pastoral) interest to me. In preparing a chapter on how the church might express itself as the Body of Christ in an ever-secularizing social venue I happened upon this quite beautiful monograph. My main interest in reading it was to explore the extent to which social justice should motivate a Christian community. I found a lot to think about here, much more than I anticipated.As a professor and historian of the United States I am well read in the origins and progress of the Civil Rights movement. The author of this book covers the same chronological ground as most. Where Marsh's monograph differs is in that at the center of the discussion is the issue of how a Christian theological impulse toward justice and reconciliation drove the Civil Rights movement to the peak of its success, and how a secularization of the movement led to its dissipation and collapse.As we in the United States experience the fury and tragedy of an unfinished project of reconciliation On the one hand we see the effects of intrinsic racism expressed in a criminal justice system that disproportionately penalizes poor blacks. On the other we are surrounded by a barely concealed knee-jerk Islamophobia that poisons our national discourse almost as hatefully as the unrestrained bigotry of Jim Crow. We wonder where the church fits. Postmodernism, more than anything else, informs us that we can't solve these problems on our own.This book convincingly demonstrates that when the Body of Christ acts to do the work of Christ in building the beloved community, real positive change can occur. And the change is not just the alleviation of material inequity, as important as that is, it is the deliberate enactment of the Kingdom of God on earth. That is indeed Christ's mission, and the mission of his church. But it also shows that when the project became secularized it lost its way. Marsh writes, "When the movement lost its anchor in the church, it began to splinter into activist groups whose spiritual visions were no larger than concerns for their own flourishing, and this proved devastating, since people are not inclined toward social relocation, economic redistribution, or racial reconciliation unless they see their own life stories in a larger theological narrative." (199)I have long been inspired by Martin Luther King, Jr. and the civil rights movement. I have admired from afar those who were willing to sacrifice so much to make God's justice real in the world. I have been stirred by King's expressed theology as well as his courage to act. This book only adds to my admiration, and as well introduces a number of others who shared the struggle both alongside King and after. I am not sure whether the stimulation and encouragement I experienced while reading this volume stems from the subject matter or its presentation. Probably both. The subject matter aside, Marsh is both a careful scholar and a fine author given to poetic turn of phrase and insightful analysis.The book is both historical and theological. It shows us how the Body of Christ has expressed itself in creative ways to create real change, and it calls us to go and do likewise. It provides solid empirical evidence that the Body of Christ can do what secular society cannot, and it thoughtfully answers a question it didn't ask but I did: building the beloved community is the work the church is here to do.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Charles Marsh writes about a father that stood for justice in MississippiBy Wendell F. WentzCharles Marsh has written about the South, his father, and the hate that was practiced during the Civil Rights era. I knew Charles' father when he was pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dothan, Alabama. He moved to Mississippi and saw the light. In Alabama he defended segregation, and in Mississippi he stood tall for civil rights and the rights of all men and women. This is a good record of the conditions in Southern Baptist churches in that era, and it is a story of redemption of a minister who saw the light and followed that light. This book is a book worthy the reading of every student of Civil Rights history in the South, especially in Alabama and Mississippi. Reverend Marsh stood face to face and toe to toe with the KKK, and he saw the leaders march to prison.6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. excellent survey of the Christian history of civil rights - good and badBy D. W. SmithGreat survey of the Christian basis of Dr. King and Civil Rights, Clarence Jordan and Koinonia Farms, and SNCC (Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee). Showed the influence of Christianity in its beginning and currently. Then second half of the book surveyed some current Christian ministries that maintain a strong Christian foundation and continue to pursue the beloved community based on the person of Jesus Christ. Especially powerful details around the Christian Community Development Association and Dr. John Perkins. Beautiful story. Very encouraging in pursuing the Beloved Community.

Speaking to his supporters at the end of the Montgomery bus boycott in 1956, Martin Luther King, Jr., declared that their common goal was not simply the end of segregation as an institution. Rather, "the end is reconciliation, the end is redemption, the end is the creation of the beloved community." King's words reflect the strong religious convictions that motivated the civil rights movement in the South in its early days. Standing courageously on the Judeo-Christian foundations of their moral commitments, civil rights leaders sought to transform the social and political realities of twentieth-century America. In *The Beloved Community*, Charles Marsh shows that the same spiritual vision that animated the civil rights movement remains a vital source of moral energy today. *The Beloved Community* lays out an exuberant new vision for progressive Christianity and reclaims the centrality of faith in the quest for social justice and authentic community.

From Publishers Weekly Starred . In this ambitious, wide-ranging book, Marsh, a religion professor at the University of Virginia, argues that the Civil Rights movement was, at its core, a Christian attempt to forge a "beloved community" of believers who identify with the poor and dispossessed and seek justice on their behalf. As his alternative telling unfolds, he introduces readers to a Martin Luther King Jr. they may not recognize (one who looked forward to a life of privilege and comfort until he was forced into leadership of the Montgomery Bus Boycott), as well as lesser-known figures such as Koinonia farm founder Clarence Jordan and Voices of Calvary founder John Perkins. Both of these men, like many others featured in the book, came to activism by way of Christian faith and belie the popular notion of "the civil rights movement as a secular movement that used religion to its advantage." Marsh laces his narrative with powerful critiques of secularism among both activists and academics and of white evangelical Christians for shallow, ineffectual concern for the poor and for people of color. He ends on a positive note, however, citing example after example of contemporary Christians eschewing lives of middle-class comfort in favor of attempts to build the beloved community in the most troubled corners of America. Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. From Booklist Marsh brings fresh perspective to the civil rights movement and the role of religion in social reform. Lamenting efforts by historians to secularize the civil rights movement, Marsh asserts that Christian principles of healing, reconciliation, and redemption were at the heart of the movement. Martin Luther King Jr and others sought not just social justice and national redemption but the "creation of the beloved community" to include citizens of all races living in peace and overcoming a long history of hatred and oppression. Marsh explores the theology behind the more radical approach of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee and the intentional interracial communities that continued efforts at reconciling religion and social reform. Recounting the struggles for racial justice and the spiritual tumult engendered in that search, Marsh offers personal portraits of courage rooted in faith as well as the ongoing debates about personal relationships with Christ and liberation theology and continued tensions between fundamentalists and social progressives. This fascinating, compelling book will appeal to readers with broad interests in religion and social justice. Vanessa Bush Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "[A] closely reasoned study of the faith expressed in good works like the Civil Rights Act and antipoverty movement." -- Kirkus "[An] ambitious, wide-ranging book." -- Publishers Weekly