



American Messiahs: False Prophets of a Damned Nation

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Mania surrounding messianic prophets has defined the national consciousness since the American Revolution. From Civil War veteran and virulent anticapitalist Cyrus Teed, to the dapper and overlooked civil rights pioneer Father Divine, to even the megalomaniacal Jim Jones, these figures have routinely been dismissed as dangerous and hysterical outliers.

After years of studying these emblematic figures, Adam Morris demonstrates that messiahs are not just a classic trope of our national culture; their visions are essential for understanding American history. As Morris demonstrates, these charismatic, if flawed, would-be prophets sought to expose and ameliorate deep social ills—such as income inequality, gender conformity, and racial injustice. Provocative and long overdue, this is the story of those who tried to point the way toward an impossible “American Dream”: men and women who momentarily captured the imagination of a nation always searching for salvation.

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