

# The Democratization Of American Christianity

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Christianity A Library of American Literature from Earliest Settlement to the Present Time *Nathan O. Hatch RONALD E. OSBORN Leonard Woolsey Bacon Michael D. LeMay Leonard Woolsey Bacon Leonard Woolsey Bacon John Corrigan Catherine A. Brekus Woolsey Leonard Bacon Leonard Bacon James K. Wellman JR. Stuart Clark Henry Stuart Clark Henry Bacon Leonard Woolsey Winthrop Still Hudson Leonard Woolsey Bacon Stephen Cox Christopher Hodge Evans Leonard Wollsey Bacon Edmund Clarence Stedman*

a provocative reassessment of religion and culture in the early days of the american republic the so called second great awakening was the shaping epoch of american protestantism and this book is the most important study of it ever published james turner journal of interdisciplinary history winner of the john hope franklin publication prize the society for historians of the early american republic book prize and the albert c outler prize in this provocative reassessment of religion and culture in the early days of the american republic nathan o hatch argues that during this period american christianity was democratized and common people became powerful actors on the religious scene hatch examines five distinct traditions or mass movements that emerged early in the nineteenth century the christian movement methodism the baptist movement the black churches and the mormons showing how all offered compelling visions of individual potential and collective aspiration to the unschooled and unsophisticated

american christianity is dying a slow death at its own hands instead of positively affecting the secular culture we are being infected by it under the guise of being seeker friendly and loving soon the church may be an exact mirror of the culture that seeks to destroy us with a lack of strong principled leaders and with followers who want their ears tickled instead of being challenged to pursue righteousness american christianity is writing its own epitaph as it slowly dies unless we reverse course by embracing the complete absolute truth of gods word and stop trying to redefine god in our selfish human image only a remnant will remain from a

once powerful church do we have the courage to challenge our leaders and ourselves to reject secular culture and its influences or will we continue to die a slow death at our own hands as we continue to inhale the cancer of secular humanism time is running out

for many christians in america becoming filled with christ first requires being empty of themselves a quality often overlooked in religious histories in emptiness john corrigan highlights for the first time the various ways that american christianity has systematically promoted the cultivation of this feeling corrigan examines different kinds of emptiness essential to american christianity such as the emptiness of deep longing the emptying of the body through fasting or weeping the emptiness of the wilderness and the emptiness of historical time itself he argues furthermore that emptiness is closely connected to the ways christian groups differentiate themselves many groups foster a sense of belonging not through affirmation but rather avowal of what they and their doctrines are not through emptiness american christians are able to assert their identities as members of a religious community drawing much needed attention to a crucial aspect of american christianity emptiness expands our understanding of historical and contemporary christian practices

from the founding of the first colonies until the present the influence of christianity as the dominant faith in american society has extended far beyond church pews into the wider culture yet at the same time christians in the united states have di

the heroic discovery of america at the close of the fifteenth century after christ has compelled the generous and just admiration of the world but the grandeur of human enterprise and achievement in the discovery of the western hemisphere has a less claim on our admiration than that divine wisdom and controlling providence which for reasons now manifested kept the secret hidden through so many millenniums in spite of continual chances of disclosure until the fullness of time

the christian message needs a new interpreter one that is particular enough to know and interpret the tradition but broad enough to evoke thought and feeling from broader groups of people including evangelicals liberals and those who are disenchanted with churched religion and who describe themselves as spiritual but not religious yet are fond of the jesus tradition this book helps readers to understand the new landscape and its key figure rob bell by bringing a reasoned voice to the conversation and shedding light on the story directions and emotional power of the figure who andy crouch claims will be the main influence on christians in this generation while his theology is seen as a theo political stage by church leaders when rob bell tours and speaks it is the unchurched the people in the pew the people who want to be in the pew who are listening by the thousands his recent placement on the cover of time magazine sealed his import on the american landscape for anyone interested in religion jonathan nathan a bookbuyer for the harvard coop the largest booksellers in new england with a significant religion section says that no book has ever sold like rob bell s to an audience that is young thoughtful and college educated bell s church has 10k members and his influence has affected every sector of the american protestant church why because rob bell has caused the whole evangelical world to rethink the scope of salvation with one single question who gets to be saved with that short sentence bell has initiated a whole new movement in rethinking what it means to be an evangelical a movement that has only begun not only are heaven and hell at stake but salvation itself is it meant for all or for only a small elect group and if so who gets to decide the parameters of that small group if heaven and hell are not ultimate identifiers for a life of faith can the passion to evangelize be maintained if salvation is not either or but both and does the whole idea of world evangelism simply disappear rob bell has created another question for evangelicals will you decide to live in a closed world of your own making or an open world those most influenced by rob bell are younger evangelicals who are dying to open up their worlds rob bell just gave them permission according to andy crouch his is the voice that will most influence this current generation for liberals rob bell gives them reason to be passionate about their faith and to

think in big terms about it without giving up their minds and their questions for the conservatives he's the voice that young christians are looking to and admiring and even if they disagree they are trying to observe and imitate his approach and appeal rob bell doesn't have the personality to sink into some religious subculture he is a new super religious brand the apple or pixar of his generation evangelicals will buy it because they want to damn him imitate him or do both liberal religionists will buy it because they know that he is a schleiermachian figure making a case for faith to its cultured despisers with passion and a new aesthetic spiritual but not religious folks will buy it because rob bell has an invitation and appeal that is rare and appeals well beyond holy huddles as an authorized biography that will allow for extensive interviews with bell and his some of his congregants this will include interviews with outside informed supporters and those that reject him and his theology the book will reveal what makes him tick how his wheaton college background affected his work and how he is dealing with accusations of being on the border of evangelical heresy this book will be researched and written over the next two month with a finish date of december 1 half or more will be available by the fall aar sbl annual meeting with the plan to have rob bell and the author presenting the book will show how is he challenging orthodoxy and why theologians are upset it will outline the key players in the debate it will also argue that no matter what the theologians say people are still attending bell's church listening to him speak this is in large part because the man has a pastor's heart he cares about his people the theologians aren't reclaiming the conversation they are making themselves irrelevant as the people who want genuine faith and are coming to rob bell's books and talks because as bell said when the woman coming to church tells me she has stopped cutting herself and that a life of faith makes a difference that's where the real things are happening finally people like him he is a charismatic speaker that young people are listening to he has something to say and he is pastorally living the heart of what he is saying

unlike some other reproductions of classic texts 1 we have not used ocr optical character recognition as this leads to bad quality books with introduced typos 2 in books where there are images such as portraits maps sketches etc we have endeavoured to keep the quality of these images so they represent accurately the original artefact although occasionally there may be certain imperfections with these old texts we feel they deserve to be made available for future generations to enjoy

this comprehensive narrative account of religion in america from 1607 through the present depicts the religious life of the american people within the context of american society it addresses topics spanning from the european puritan origins of american religious thought encompassing the ramifications of the great awakening and the effect of nationhood on religious practice and extending through to the shifting religious configuration of the late 20th century

this wide ranging study examines the ever evolving forms of christianity in the us and why this constant reinvention is a vital part of american faith christianity takes an astonishing variety of forms in america from traditional chapels to modern megachurches from evangelical fellowships to social action groups and from pentecostal faith to apocalyptic movements stephen cox argues that radical and unpredictable change is one of the few dependable features of christianity in america it is in a necessary and ongoing state of revolution and has been throughout our history cox explores how both catholic and protestant churches have evolved in ways that would make them seem alien to their past adherents he traces the rise of uniquely american movements from the mormons to the seventh day adventists and jehovah s witnesses and brings to life the vivid personalities aimee semple mcpherson billy sunday and many others who have taken the gospel to the masses cox also sheds new light on such issues as american christians constantly changing political involvements their controversial revisions in the style and substance of worship and their chronic expectation that god is about to intervene conclusively in human life asserting that a church that doesn t promise new beginnings can never prosper

in america cox demonstrates that american christianity must be seen not as a sociological phenomenon but as the ever changing story of individual seekers

to tell the story of america is in many ways to tell the story of religion in america at every point in its history america was and still is religious and diversely so to understand how religion shaped america s history is to trace the influence of america s dominant faith tradition christianity but american christianity like religion in america is a wonderfully varied movement in this comprehensive eminently readable introduction christopher evans maps the pluralism of american christianity around its historic center demonstrating the enduring role of protestantism despite the wide assortment of distinctly american religious innovation in histories of american christianity evans thus narrates the intellectual history chronicles the story of sectarian divisions and explores how christianity became so intertwined with and pervasive in public life but evans also shines fresh light on what has been omitted through the use of individual stories focusing on the traditionally marginalized e g women african americans and latino a descendants evans weaves together a tapestry of american christian orthodoxy and tradition over the centuries what results is a readable and teachable volume grounded in research and packed with critical reflection that chronicles america s rich christian history

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