

1950 Crossroads Of American Religious Life

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1950: Crossroads of American Religious Life
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The year 1950 saw the height of the postwar religious boom in America and also the depths of the Cold War. It was a year when religious enthusiasm and postwar affluence coexisted with anxiety about global communism and an ever-present nuclear threat. McCarthyism, the advent of the hydrogen bomb, and the onset of the Korean War provoked ardent and diverse responses from religious leaders and occasioned lively debate in flourishing religious journalism. Robert Ellwood's1950is a cultural time capsule, recovering the impetus for many of today's trends, remembering endings and beginnings, and documenting many other developments in American religious life of fifty years ago. It highlights the parallels and divergences between religious culture then and now.

Most forms of religion are best understood in the con- text of their relationship with the surrounding culture. This may be particularly true in the United States. Certainly immigrant Catholicism became Americanized; mainstream Protestantism accommodated itself to the modern world; and Reform Judaism is at home in American society. In Evangelicalism, Richard Kyle explores paradoxical adjustments and transformations in the relationship between conservative Protestant Evangelicalism and contemporary American culture. Evangelicals have resisted many aspects of the modern world, but Kyle focuses on what he considers their romance with popular culture. Kyle sees this as an Americanized Christianity rather than a Christian America, but the two are so intertwined that it is difficult to discern the difference between them. Instead, in what has become a vicious self-serving cycle, Evangelicals have baptized and sanctified secular culture in order to be considered culturally relevant, thus increasing their numbers and success within abundantly populous and populist-driven American society. In doing so, Evangelicalism has become a middle-class movement, one that dominates America's culture, and unabashedly populist. Many Evangelicals view America as God's chosen nation, thus sanctifying American culture, consumerism, and middle-class values. Kyle believes Evangelicals have served themselves well in consciously and deliberately adjusting their faith to popular culture. Yet he also thinks Evangelicals may have compromised themselves and their future in the process, so heavily borrowing from the popular culture that in many respects the Evangelical subculture has become secularism with a light gilding of Christianity. If so, he asks, can Evangelicalism survive its own popularity and reaffirm its religious origins, or will it assimilate and be absorbed into what was once known as the Great American Melting Pot of religions and cultures? Will the Gospel of the American dream ultimately engulf and destroy the Gospel of Evangelical success in America? This thoughtful and thought-provoking volume will interest anyone concerned with the modern-day success of the Evangelical movement in America and the aspirations and fate of its faithful.

Examines the image of Israel in American culture before 1960.

Identifying the major trends and telling moments within both major denominations and other less formal religious movements, Allitt asks how these religious groups have shaped, and been shaped by, some of the most important and divisive political issues and events of the last half century, including the Cold War, the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War, feminism and the sexual revolution, abortion rights, and the antinuclear and environmentalist movements.

This book provides a stimulating account of the dominant cultural forms of 1950s America: fiction and poetry; theatre and performance; film and television; music and radio; and the visual arts. Through detailed commentary and focused case studies of influential texts and events - from Invisible Man to West Side Story, from Disneyland to the Seattle World's Fair, from Rear Window to The Americans - the book examines the way in which modernism and the cold war offer two frames of reference for understanding the trajectory of postwar culture. The two core aims of this volume are to chart the changing complexion of American culture in the years following World War II and to provide readers with a critical investigation of 'the 1950s'. The book provides an intellectual context for approaching 1950s American culture and considers the historical impact of the decade on recent social and cultural developments.

This fascinating volume argues that American leaders in the early Cold War considered the conflict to be profoundly religious, that they saw Communism not as godless but as a religion fighting faith with faith. As a result, they deliberately used religious beliefs and institutions as part of the plan to defeat the Soviet enemy. Jonathan Herzog offers an illuminating account of the spiritual-industrial complex, chronicling the rhetoric, programs, and policies that became its hallmarks.

Nearly a half century after her death in 1972, Mahalia Jackson remains the most esteemed figure in black gospel music history. Born in the backstreets of New Orleans in 1911, Jackson during the Great Depression joined the Great Migration to Chicago, where she became an highly regarded church singer and, by the mid-fifties, a coveted recording artist for Apollo and Columbia Records, lauded as the "World's Greatest Gospel Singer." This "Louisiana Cinderella" narrative of Jackson's career during the decade following World War II carried important meanings for African Americans, though it remains a story half told. Jackson was gospel's first multi-mediated artist, with a nationally broadcast radio program, a Chicago-based television show, and early recordings that introduced straight-out-of-the-church black gospel to American and European audiences while also tapping the vogue for religious pop in the early Cold War. In some ways, Jackson's successes made her an exceptional case, though she is perhaps best understood as part of broader developments in the black gospel field. Built upon foundations laid by pioneering Chicago organizers in the 1930s, black gospel singing, with Jackson as its most visible representative, began to circulate in novel ways as a form of popular culture in the 1940s and 1950s, its practitioners accruing prestige not only through devout integrity but also from their charismatic artistry, public recognition, and pop-cultural cachet. These years also saw shifting strategies in the black freedom struggle that gave new cultural-political significance to African American vernacular culture. The first book on Jackson in 25 years, Mahalia Jackson and the Black Gospel Field draws on a trove of previously unexamined archival sources that illuminate Jackson's childhood in New Orleans and her negotiation of parallel careers as a singing Baptist evangelist and a mass media entertainer, documenting the unfolding material and symbolic influence of Jackson and black gospel music in postwar American society.

Examines the narratives that are the basis of the cultural identity of the United States and demonstrates how the "American mythos" has legitimized American society and prevented it from realizing its ideals.

Satan in America tells the story of America's complicated relationship with the devil. "New light" evangelists of the eighteenth century, enslaved African Americans, demagogic politicians, and modern American film-makers have used the devil to damn their enemies, explain the nature of evil and injustice, mount social crusades, construct a national identity, and express anxiety about matters as diverse as the threat of war to the dangers of deviant sexuality. The idea of the monstrous and the bizarre providing cultural metaphors that interact with historical change is not new. Poole takes a new tack by examining this idea in conjunction with the concerns of American religious history. The book shows that both the range and the scope of American religiousness made theological evil an especially potent symbol. Satan appears repeatedly on the political, religious, and cultural landscape of the United States, a shadow self to the sunny image of American progress and idealism.

Over the past seventy years, World Vision has grown from a small missionary agency to the largest Christian humanitarian organization in the world, with 40,000 employees, offices in nearly one hundred countries, and an annual budget of over \$2 billion. While founder Bob Pierce was an evangelist with street smarts, the most recent World Vision U.S. presidents move with ease between megachurches, the boardrooms of Fortune 500 companies, and the corridors of Capitol Hill. Though the organization has remained decidedly Christian, it has earned the reputation as an elite international nongovernmental organization managed efficiently by professional experts fluent in the language of both marketing and development. God's Internationalists is the first comprehensive study of World Vision-or any such religious humanitarian agency. In chronicling the organization's transformation from 1950 to the present, David P. King approaches World Vision as a lens through which to explore shifts within post-World War II American evangelicalism as well as the complexities of faith-based humanitarianism. Chroncling the evolution of World Vision's practices, theology, rhetoric, and organizational structure, King demonstrates how the organization rearticulated and retained its Christian identity even as it expanded beyond a narrow American evangelical subculture. King's pairing of American evangelicals' interactions abroad with their own evolving identity at home reframes the traditional narrative of modern American evangelicalism while also providing the historical context for the current explosion of evangelical interest in global social engagement. By examining these patterns of change, God's Internationalists offers a distinctive angle on the history of religious humanitarianism.

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