



Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination

Robert H. Abzug

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In the forty years before the Civil War, America was awash in political and social reform movements. Abolitionists stormed against the cruelties of slavery. Temperance zealots hounded producers and consumers of strong drink. Sabbatarians fought to make Sunday an officially recognized sacred day. Woman's rights activists proclaimed the case for sexual equality. This colorful text brilliantly reassesses the religious roots of these antebellum reform movements through a series of penetrating profiles of key men and women who sought to remake their worlds in sacred terms. Arguing that we cannot understand American reform movements unless we understand the sacred significance reformers bestowed on the worldly arenas of politics, society, and the economy, Abzug presents these men and women in their own words, placing their cherished ideals and their often heated squabbles within the context of their millennial and sometimes apocalyptic sense of America's role in the cosmic drama. Tracing the lasting impact of what began as a peculiarly Protestant, largely New England, style of social action on the uniquely American traditions of activism that flourish today, *Cosmos Crumbling* is invaluable for helping students of American and religious history understand the myriad ways in which the quest for enlightenment and salvation continues to shape American politics.

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