



Cold War Christians and the Spectre of Nuclear Deterrence, 1945-1959 (Histories of the Sacred and Secular, 1700-2000)

Jonathan Gorry

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This book offers a new and provocative interpretation of early Cold War history by demonstrating how Christian agency played a pivotal role in the creating of space for the logic of nuclear deterrence and nuclear war fighting in the years 1945-59. Cold War chroniclers have traditionally placed great emphasis on threats of mutually assured destruction to explain the puzzle of nuclear non-use since 1945. Here nuclear deterrence is conceived as a realm of absolute necessity with no room for morality. More recently the idea of 'nuclear taboo' has generated immense interest by challenging conventional wisdom with a compelling argument regarding the conceptual (normative rather than material) bases of nuclear restraint. These accounts narrate the emergence of a distinctive ethical order with a particular premium placed on the role of (Anglo-American) Christian activists in giving rise to anti-nuclear sentiment at a formative stage 1945-59. Yet such a reading elides or obfuscates the fact that Christians were deeply divided in their imaginings. Gorry invites a reassessment of assumptions by offering a balanced examination of Christians as enablers but, more provocatively, as resisters of nuclear prohibitions in the early years of Cold War.

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