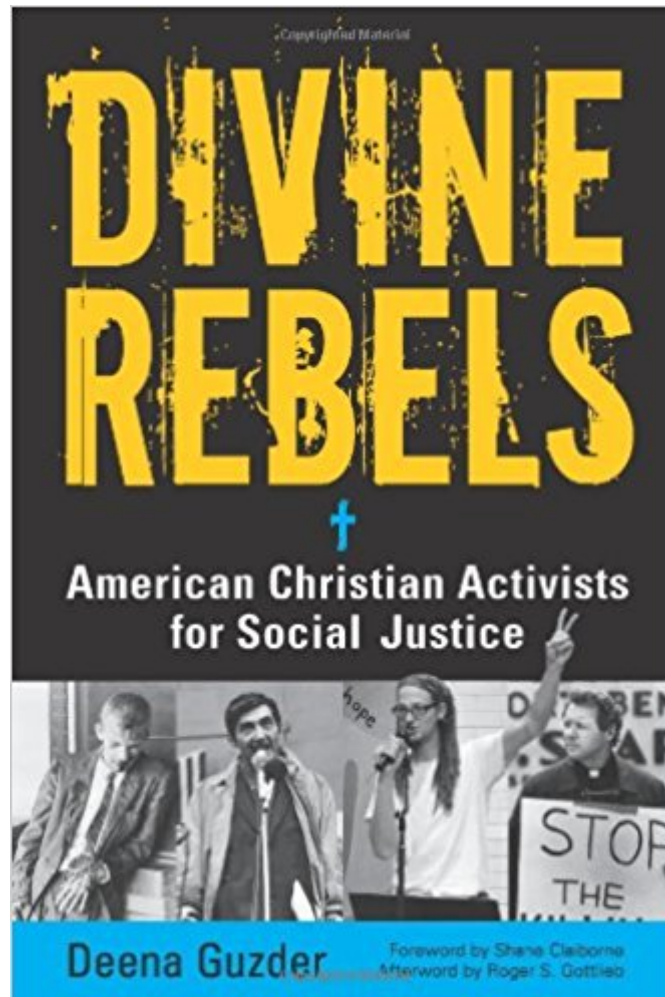


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Divine Rebels: American Christian Activists For Social Justice



Synopsis

Divine Rebels chronicles the extraordinary efforts of American Christian activists who agitate for a world free of racism, patriarchy, bigotry, retribution, ecocide, torture, poverty, and militarism. While pundits speak of the 'Religious Right,' this is the underreported story of American Christians who are progressive because they are religious. They don't see themselves simply performing good work, but Godly work. They believe in a community based on ethics, a world with infinite potential for improvement, and an inclusive God of love. These rabble-rousers are small in number, and their efficacy is best measured on the margins, but they are part and parcel of an American tradition that began with the nation's earliest Quaker abolitionists. By profiling social justice activists on the frontlines of the 'Christian Left' since the 1960s, Divine Rebels articulates a forward-thinking, faith-based alternative to both the conservative drone warping religion as well as the political left's alienating cynicism.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

'Religion kills', religion 'is a form of mental illness', 'religion poisons everything' - these are some of the hyperbolic slogans put forward by the popular New Atheist movement over the last decade. However, in this meticulously researched and refreshing debut, Deena Guzder helps counter the reductionist polemic of Dawkins, Harris and Hitchens by revealing the under-reported story of progressive Christian activists in America. For secular liberals and foreign onlookers, it can often appear that 'Christian activism' comprises solely of attacking abortion clinics or rallying against gay marriage - yet the voices of the religious left are often drowned out by the louder, more

confrontational right as well as ignored by progressive atheists. Nevertheless, these compassionate campaigners, motivated by their faith, have pushed for social progress throughout US history, rather than hindering it - aiding Native Americans, confronting slavery and supporting gender equality movements. Guzder profiles ten more recent individuals who, instead of proselytising, "hope to serve as God's hands and feet rather than as his mouthpiece" and who "bear no resemblance to parochial, hierarchical and exclusionary fundamentalists obsessed with determining who descends to hell." From those who achieved their vision, such as Jim Zwerg and Sue Zann Bosler, to those who are continuing their struggle, such as John Dear and Charlotte Keys - the famous and less well known examples selected by Guzder embody their religious convictions, disavow violence and remain inspiring examples of humility, commitment and sacrifice. These stimulating stories have helped me to mature beyond the black-and-white rhetoric of the somewhat combative form of atheism I once held.

As someone who knows about most of the people profiled in this book and knows a couple of them personally, I really wish I could heartily endorse it. I can't. The book is marred by so many errors in the small stuff that I came to feel I would have to fact check everything. Many of these errors are things any good editor should (would?) have caught. A sample: Incorrect usage/spelling: On p. 99 we read "Seeking to qualm the refugees' fears of outsiders..."...err...that should be "quell" or "calm", not this hybrid, non-existent verb. This is followed on p. 100 by writing that Jim Corbett could provide "legal council". Perhaps someone could provide the author, a self-professed graduate from one of the nation's top journalism schools, Columbia University, with remedial English? Spell-check is not a substitute for old-fashioned editing. Inconsistencies: One of the first things that leaped to my attention (perhaps because of this author's obsession with close, but not always accurate, physical description) is that the color of Fr. Roy Bourgeois' eyes changes from "blue as lapis lazuli" on p. 67 to "dove-gray" by p. 88. Prison might do that to a man, but to me it just smacks of careless "cut and paste" journalism. The author's physical descriptions are picturesque but not always correct. Mons. Oscar Romero is described as wearing "aviator glasses" (p. 65). He didn't. The late archbishop's glasses are part of the permanent collection at the Pacifist Living History Museum and can be seen on its website. On p. 138, the late Brazilian archbishop, Dom Helder Camara is described as "stocky", whereas those of us who met Camara in his later years would hardly attribute such an adjective to the diminutive and somewhat physically frail cleric. Misleading phrases: On p.

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