

Material Christianity: Religion and Popular Culture in America

Dr. Colleen McDannell



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What can the religious objects used by nineteenth- and twentieth-century Americans tell us about American Christianity? What is the relationship between the beliefs of the faithful and the landscapes they build? This lavishly illustrated book investigates the history and meaning of Christian material culture in America over the last 150 years. Drawing on a rich array of historical sources and on in-depth interviews with Protestants, Catholics, and Mormons, Colleen McDannell examines the relationship between religion and mass consumption. McDannell claims that previous studies of American Christianity have overemphasized the written, cognitive, and ethical dimensions of religion, presenting faith as a disembodied system of beliefs. She shifts attention from the church and the theological seminary to the workplace, home, cemetery, and Sunday school. Thus McDannell highlights a different Christianity - one in which average Christians experience the divine, the nature of death, the power of healing, and the meaning of community through interacting with a created world of devotional images, environments, and objects.



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