

# The War Against Proslavery Religion: Abolitionism and Northern Churches, 1830-1865

HISTORY/UNITED STATES

"This fine book has two central themes developed in tandem, more or less chronologically. One is the effort of abolitionists to convert clergymen and church people of the North to their cause. The other is the quarrel among leaders of these churches over endorsement of abolitionist goals such as the denunciation of slaveholding as a sin against God and the cessation of Christian fellowship with congregations including slaveholders."

—*American Historical Review*

"This well-researched and meticulously documented book thoroughly examines the efforts of abolitionists to convert American churches to their cause. . . . Historians have generally portrayed northern churches as being far in advance of public opinion in their antislavery views. Through extensive research in both manuscript and contemporary printed sources and judicious use of secondary literature, McKivigan has proven this to be a misperception of history. With few exceptions, the view of the northern churches on slavery was not far, if at all, in advance of the Republican party, and it certainly lagged far behind that of the abolitionists. Besides offering a new interpretation of an important aspect of antebellum history, this book provides a new perspective on the failure to ensure equal rights for the freedmen after the war."

—*Journal of Southern History*

"McKivigan shows that abolitionists, who were not infrequently clergymen themselves, found an enormous and nearly insurmountable challenge in their efforts to persuade formal church denominations to accept the idea that slavery was a sin and fellowship with slaveholders was not to be countenanced. . . . He addresses with logic and documentation the reasons why church leaderships held back from the abolitionist movement and why, during the early 1860s, it was won over to the abolitionist program. His book is eminently readable and his research admirable."

—*Ohio History*

"This superbly researched and carefully written volume examines historical evidence of the relationship between the abolitionist movement and the northern churches in the middle years of the nineteenth century. . . . McKivigan presents evidence to support the thesis that the attitude of the northern religious community toward slavery prior to the Civil War was more ambiguous than has been supposed. . . . It will be regarded as the authoritative study of the topic."

—*Choice*

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