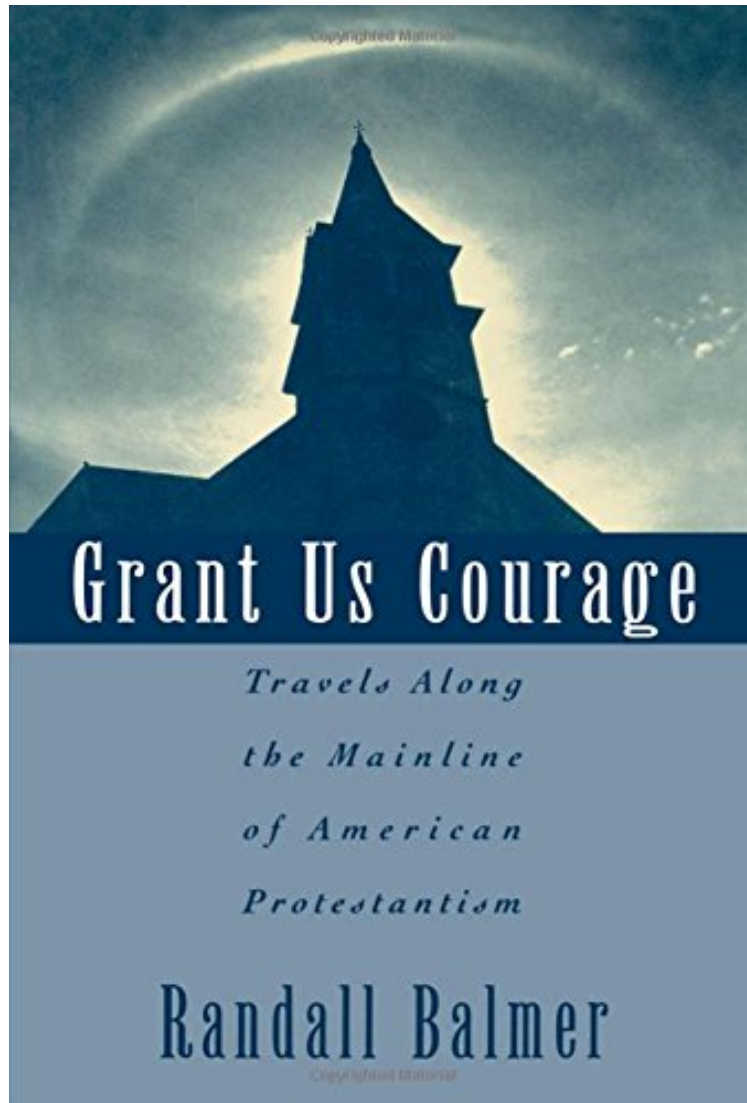


[Download ebook] Grant Us Courage: Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism

# Grant Us Courage: Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism

Randall Balmer

ebooks / Download PDF / \*ePub / DOC / audiobook



[Download](#)

[Read Online](#)

#3042710 in Books Randall Herbert Balmer 1996-01-18 Original language: English PDF # 1 8.50 x .75 x 5.811, .73 #File Name: 0195100867176 pages Grant Us Courage Travels along the Mainline of American Protestantism | File size: 48.Mb

**Randall Balmer : Grant Us Courage: Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Grant Us Courage: Travels Along the Mainline of American Protestantism:

In 1950, *Christian Century* ran a series of articles on twelve churches, some large, some small, each representing a strand of American mainline Protestantism. Now, nearly fifty years later, Randall Balmer--author and host of *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, the acclaimed book and PBS series on American evangelicism--has revisited each of these twelve churches to take the pulse of Protestantism today. The result is a remarkable narrative, graced with touches of local color and memorable portraits of the people involved, and filled with deft observations and carefully nuanced insights about Protestantism at century's end. Much as he did in *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, Balmer crisscrosses America to give us a first-hand look at how Christianity has fared in the last half-century. What emerges is a church challenged by diminished influence, but with signs of hope for the future. For instance, he takes us to West Hartford, Connecticut, where we learn how a gregarious pastor, Bob Heppenstall, rekindled the spirit of the First Church of Christ Congregational--still housed in its stately, classic New England meetinghouse--that had suffered from inept management until recent years. And in Ames, Iowa, at the Collegiate United Methodist Church, we watch George White struggle to regain his church's once dominant voice in the religious life of the town, a voice now dimmed by the growth of fundamentalism. Some churches have held steadfastly to long-established roles, such as the Washington Prairie Lutheran Church, in Decorah, Iowa, which has been a model of continuity, serving its Norwegian-American community in much the same way since it was founded in 1851. And Balmer also visits some thriving churches, such as Hollywood's First Presbyterian Church, led by the great preacher John Lloyd Ogilvie, who was recently appointed chaplain of the U.S. Senate. In Minneapolis, Balmer encounters Mount Olivet Lutheran Church, a congregation that has not only increased its membership, but can now call itself the biggest Lutheran church in the world. In *Grant Us Courage*, one of our most thoughtful chroniclers of the American scene offers an intimate look at mainline Protestantism at the close of the century. We come away with the feeling of having been there, of having listened to the voices of an important segment of Christian life, and of having found a deeper understanding of religious life in America today.

From Publishers Weekly Balmer, professor of religion at Columbia, is best known as the personable and insightful host of the PBS Series, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory*, and author of the 1994 book by the same name. Balmer once again crisscrosses America, this time to revisit the 12 churches that, in 1950, were chosen by the readers of *Christian Century* magazine as America's "great" mainline Protestant congregations. In so doing, the author provides his 1995 readers with 12 vivid snapshots of the tremendous changes in American religious life. He concludes that while several of the 1950 12 still have remarkable life, none would now be known as "great." (In 1950, for instance, one of the "powerful" churches reported that nearby schools all checked its calendar before making up theirs; the reverse is now true.) From their position of overweening confidence in 1950, most of the 12 have now been marginalized by the surrounding culture. Balmer is an engaging and challenging commentator with a sprightly style, and his concluding essay on the state of the American church is absolutely penetrating. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Balmer (The Presbyterians, LJ 1/93) here revisits 12 "great churches" (all Protestant) that *Christian Century* profiled in 1950. Many have fallen on hard times, with diminished congregations and resources, though a few--such as Hollywood First Presbyterian--continue to flourish. Bellevue Baptist of Cordova, Tennessee, abandoned downtown Memphis for the suburbs and the mainstream for militant fundamentalism. Balmer believes that American Protestantism has become "calcified, complacent, routinized, and institutionalized...bereft of ideas and wary of innovation." As Balmer demonstrates, American religion now thrives on the margins of evangelicalism and New Age spirituality. For general readers. Richard S. Watts, San Bernardino Cty. Lib., Cal. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Booklist* When a mainline Protestant journal commissions an account of mainline Protestant churches, it is not unreasonable to expect a mainline result. For the most part, that expectation is met in Balmer's account, commissioned in 1990 as a follow-up to a 1950 *Christian Century* series on 12 "great" churches. That Balmer's attention as a historian has been more focused on Evangelicalism than on mainline Protestantism makes for an interesting crack in a project that would otherwise have been unredeemably monotonous. The rise of Evangelicalism in the U.S. over the past half century makes the designation "mainline" questionable for the congregations described here, but that is part of the interest of the study. The designation "great" is equally questionable. It was conferred by a survey of the readership in 1950, and one rationale for this follow-up seems to have been to determine whether churches that were "great" then remain "great" now. That is an intriguing question for an ethnographically inclined historian, and Balmer succeeds in transforming it into an engaging narrative that should provoke thoughtful reflection on what is "mainline" and what is "great" in Protestantism in the U.S. at the end of the twentieth century. Steve Schroeder