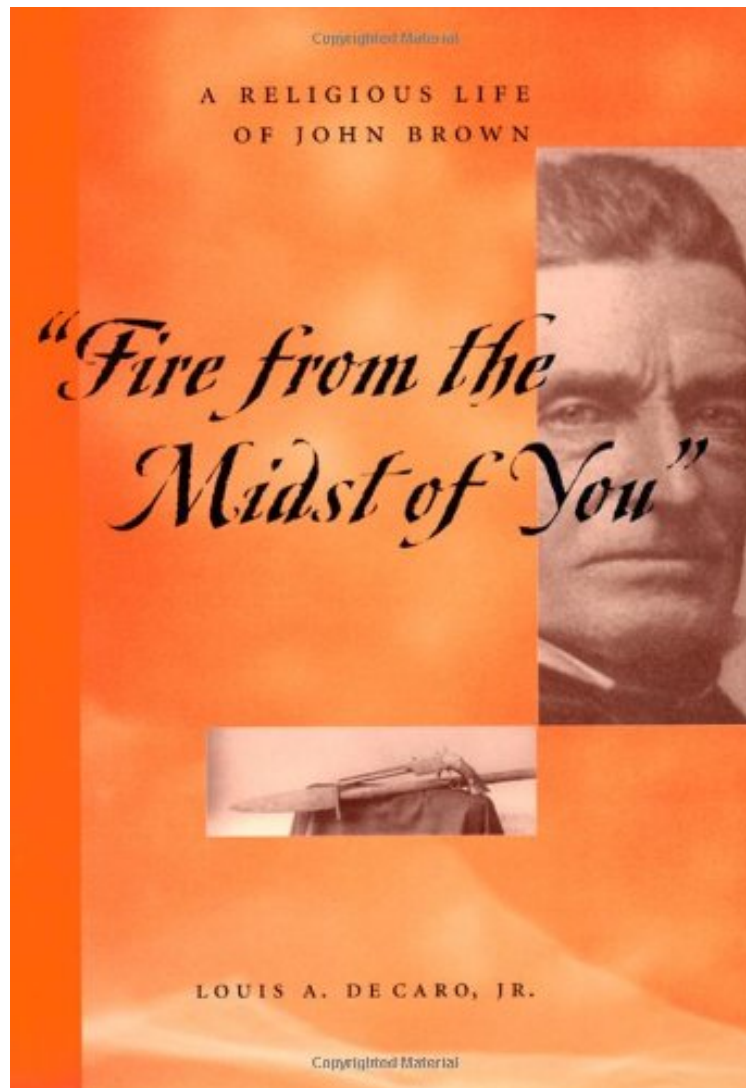


[Free] "Fire From the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown

## "Fire From the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown

*Louis A Decaro Jr.*

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#3512737 in Books NYU Press 2002-12-22 2002-12-22Ingredients: Example IngredientsOriginal language:EnglishPDF # 1 9.02 x .94 x 5.98l, 1.41 #File Name: 081471921X349 pages | File size: 76.Mb

**Louis A Decaro Jr. :** "Fire From the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised "Fire From the Midst of You": A Religious Life of John Brown:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Amazing bookBy Lincoln RoseA ot of books over the years have painted John Brown as a mental case and fanatic. This is the first book to seriously trace back the way his religious faith impacted his development. In his day, he ran into the same mentality going on today: people are much more willing to take seriously someone who claims God tells them to uphold discrimination and hatred than someone who

feels called to break it down.1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Fire From the Midst of YOUBy Bizzy ReadingAn excellent biography of John Brown, and a must for anyone interested in him or the Abolitionist movement. The author explores the very important religious background and beliefs of Brown, which is misunderstood by many secular authors and people without the understanding of fundamentalist Congregationalism. A very enjoyable read about what is often a difficult subject, and historically accurate.11 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Moral and mortal John BrownBy Jean Libby, Allies for FreedomThis is the first actual biography of John Brown published since the 1970s, by historian and religious educator Louis A. DeCaro, Jr. It skillfully contextualizes John Brown's religious and abolitionist development within his Calvinist background and the evangelical movement of nineteenth century America. John Brown is shown -- through careful and lengthy research -- as a son, brother, husband (twice), and father as well as the leader of the militant abolitionists. The book is especially rich with the relationship of John Brown to African Americans, notably free people in the North who were creating communities of families and congregations in Springfield, Massachusetts and in Essex County, New York. These individuals come alive in their relationship with John Brown, who the author calls "the practical shepherd," assisting with ownership of small farms and businesses, extending the American dream of self-sufficiency, land ownership, and the rights of citizenship to African Americans. DeCaro has researched Thomas Thomas, first an employee at John Brown's wool warehouse and then a restaurateur who moves to Illinois and becomes a friend of Abraham Lincoln: "Brown and Lincoln never came so close as they did in friendship with Thomas Thomas, and the black man could speak with some authority about both leaders." Dr. DeCaro does not flinch from analysis of the Pottawatomie Massacre in Kansas in 1856, and develops an accurate background of the threatening acts of the victims. He examines several historical viewpoints about the incident, and has found a recollection by the granddaughter of Henry Thompson, the son-in-law of John Brown who was part of the violent attack. The author asks: "perhaps a fundamentally different question is needed to frame the Pottawatomie killings. What kind of circumstances would drive exceptionally moral and religious people like the Browns to such desparate measures?" This biographer of John Brown feels his subject deeply, from his heart, and from his chest as he breathes new life into the complex and human individual whose moral fire made people worldwide think about the immorality of slavery.

John Brown is usually remembered as a terrorist whose unbridled hatred of slavery drove him to the ill-fated raid on Harper's Ferry, Virginia, in 1859. Tried and executed for seizing the arsenal and attempting to spur a liberation movement among the slaves, Brown was the ultimate cause celebre for a country on the brink of civil war. Fire from the Midst of You situates Brown within the religious and social context of a nation steeped in racism, showing his roots in Puritan abolitionism. DeCaro explores Brown's unusual family heritage as well as his business and personal losses, retracing his path to the Southern gallows. In contrast to the popular image of Brown as a violent fanatic, DeCaro contextualizes Brown's actions, emphasizing the intensely religious nature of the antebellum U.S. in which he lived. He articulates the nature of Brown's radical faith and shows that, when viewed in the context of his times, he was not the religious fanatic that many have understood him to be. DeCaro calls Brown a Protestant saintan imperfect believer seeking to realize his own perceived calling in divine providence. In line with the post-millennial theology of his day, Brown understood God as working through mankind and the church to renew and revive sinful humanity. He read the Bible not only as God's word, but as God's word to John Brown. DeCaro traces Brown's life and development to show how by forging faith as a radical weapon, Brown forced the entire nation to a point of crisis. Fire from the Midst of You defies the standard narrative with a new reading of John Brown. Here is the man that the preeminent Black scholar W.E.B. Du Bois called a "mighty warning" and the one Malcolm X called a real white liberal.

From Publishers WeeklyJohn Brown's 1859 raid on Harper's Ferry is a contested event in American history: was Brown a brave abolitionist sacrificing his life for the lives of Southern slaves? Or was he a ruffian and outlaw? In this illuminating study, pastor and author DeCaro (best known for his two books on Malcolm X) sets Brown in the context of American religious history, arguing that Brown was no less than "a Protestant saint." Brown, the son of an abolitionist, was a deeply religious man who eschewed "vain and frivolous conversation" for Bible-reading. He was not alone, DeCaro shows, in understanding abolitionism through a religious lens. American Protestant thought pushed many Christians to activism. The post-millennial theology of the day insisted that Jesus would return to Earth only after a 1,000-year reign of peace; this theology of optimism encouraged many Christians to get involved in reform campaigns like abolitionism, as they tried to help make the world a better place and hasten Jesus' return. In this context, DeCaro suggests, the raid at Harper's Ferry looks less like extremist violence and more like heroic self-sacrifice; Brown's death looks less like a madman's suicide and more like a martyrdom. DeCaro's portrayal of John Brown is hardly path-breaking. Scholars have long understood the connections between post-millennialism and abolitionism, and many writers, from W.E.B. Du Bois to Russell Banks, have previously suggested that Brown's politics were bound up with his faith. Nonetheless, this useful book-length study is a welcome addition to the literature on John Brown. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library JournalWhen abolitionist martyr John Brown led an armed raid on Harper's Ferry, VA, in October 1859, he helped set the stage for the American Civil War.

Yet as pastor and educator DeCaro points out, Brown himself felt that all life was precious, claiming that he would fight no war "unless it was a war of liberty." DeCaro (Malcolm and the Cross) sets out to establish Brown's legacy as one grounded in an alternative evangelical tradition that decried pacifism, developed a doctrine of holy war, and called any church that did not actively work for abolition anti-Christian. He places Brown in his religious milieu, reforming the legacy of this religious extremist into "a [Protestant] saint in his own way a sincere believer, however imperfect, also believing himself carried along by God's grace and mercy." Combining a moral and ethical abhorrence of slavery with a genuine religious fervor, he is the modern embodiment of that most reviled social pariah, the uncompromising fanatic. More ambitious than a popular history but not quite a scholarly treatise, DeCaro's plainly written book may find an audience among readers with a deep interest in history and religion. Recommended for larger public and academic libraries. Sandra Collins, Duquesne Univ. Lib., Pittsburgh Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. A welcome addition to the literature of John Brown.-Publishers Weekly

Traces the religious and political trajectory of John Brown not as the fanatic bent on waging war against the United States, but as a religious revolutionary, like Malcolm X, following a biblical command that places justice before peace. Louis DeCaro's fresh interpretation of Brown and his time does more than rescue a maligned figure in U.S. history from an army of scholarly foes. He offers a deeply nuanced character profile of Brown and his family, a charismatic abolitionist who took his Bible seriously, and shook his country the better to shake slavery out of it. No future study of John Brown can ignore this book.-William Loren Katz, author of Eyewitness: A Living Documentary of the African American Contribution to American History

DeCaro sets out to establish Brown's legacy as one grounded in an alternative evangelical tradition that decried pacifism, developed a doctrine of holy war, and called any church that did not actively work for abolition anti-Christian. He places Brown in his religious milieu, reforming the legacy of this religious extremist.-Library Journal

Skillfully contextualizes John Brown's religious and abolitionist development within his Calvinist background and the evangelical movement of nineteenth-century America.-Jean Libby, editor of John Brown Mysteries

A welcome addition to the literature on John Brown's life and legacy. One of the book's strongest features is its detailed description of Brown's longstanding contacts and friendships with black Americans. But DeCaro's most important achievement is to have explored in greater depth and more sympathetically than any previous scholar the precise nature of the religious convictions that shaped Brown's career as a freedom fighter. -Gerald W. McFarland, author of A Scattered People: An American Family Moves West