



The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South

By Patrick Mason

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"It incarnates every unclean beast of lust, guile, falsehood, murder, despotism and spiritual wickedness." So wrote a prominent Southern Baptist official in 1899 of Mormonism. Rather than the "quintessential American religion," as it has been dubbed by contemporary scholars, in the late nineteenth century Mormonism was America's most vilified homegrown faith. A vast national campaign featuring politicians, church leaders, social reformers, the press, women's organizations, businessmen, and ordinary citizens sought to end the distinctive Latter-day Saint practice of plural marriage, and to extinguish the entire religion if need be.

Placing the movement against polygamy in the context of American and southern history, Mason demonstrates that anti-Mormonism was one of the earliest vehicles for reconciliation between North and South after the Civil War and Reconstruction. Southerners joined with northern reformers and Republicans to endorse the use of newly expanded federal power to vanquish the perceived threat to Christian marriage and the American republic.

Anti-Mormonism was a significant intellectual, legal, religious, and cultural phenomenon, but in the South it was also violent. While southerners were concerned about distinctive Mormon beliefs and political practices, they were most alarmed at the "invasion" of Mormon missionaries in their communities and the prospect of their wives and daughters falling prey to polygamy. Moving to defend their homes and their honor against this threat, southerners turned to legislation, to religion, and, most dramatically, to vigilante violence.

The Mormon Menace provides new insights into some of the most important discussions of the late nineteenth century and of our own age, including debates over the nature and limits of religious freedom; the contest between the will of the people and the rule of law; and the role of citizens, churches, and the state in regulating and defining marriage.

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Editorial Review

Review

". . . Patrick Mason has made a valuable contribution to the field of Mormon studies. *The Mormon Menace* is a fine illustration of just how successful contemporary scholarship on Mormon history has been in moving beyond older conceptual models focused primarily on Utah and the West. . . well researched and thoughtfully written."--*Utah Historical Quarterly*

"Mason illuminates relatively unknown episodes in southern history and finds relevant meaning for Mormons, the South, and the nation as a whole."--*Journal of Southern Religion*

"Written with flair and intelligence, this book finds large themes in the activity of Mormon itinerant ministers in the late 19th-century American South and provides new and valuable insights about religion and violence, second generation Mormonism, and postbellum white culture in the American South. Patrick Mason, one of the best of the new generation of LDS scholars, uses the case study of Mormon missionaries to look at the post-Civil War American South. He takes another step in the increasing maturity of Mormon studies, as old and narrow views are replaced with mainstream methods and ideas. He gives his topic a fresh look, and the result is a valuable new view of the Mormon role in the American experience. Mormonism becomes a case study for studying the values, religion, and violence of the postbellum American South." --Ronald Walker, author of *Massacre at Mountain Meadows*

"Patrick Mason tells an adventurous and violent story in this account of Mormon lynchings in the nineteenth-century South. His careful dissection of these bloody events leads us deep into the southern mentality and the contentious images of Mormonism in America. He finds the southern experience even reshaped Mormonism's view of itself. No reader will come away from this book feeling entirely comfortable." --Richard Bushman, Gouverneur Morris Professor of History, Emeritus, Columbia University

"A deeply researched, clearly written analysis of an almost unknown aspect of southern and religious history. It fills an important gap in scholarship and by so doing illuminates a wide variety of interpretative issues in both fields. This perceptive and creatively conceived study should be widely read and the author applauded for realizing the significance of a hitherto neglected topic." --John Boles, William P. Hobby Professor of History, Rice University

"The Mormon Menace is a good book, well-researched and thoughtfully written"--Brandon Johnson, Bristow, Virginia

"'The Mormon Menace' exemplifies the historical analysis at its best-careful consideration of cultural contexts, both past and present, thus making our history not only understandable, but extremely relevant."--Blair Dee Hodes, Association for Mormon Letters

"A review would be incomplete without mentioning that the book is a pleasure to read. Mason has command of facts and details but nonetheless manages to keep the narrative moving without getting bogged down in minutiae."--*Mark Brown, Common Consent*

"Mason's excellent analysis of the complexities that result when political agendas, regional norms and interests, and theories on the proper role and limits of government all collide in the face of religious heterodoxy."--*Terryl L. Givens, University of Richmond*

"The Mormon Menace is surprisingly captivating, and at an affordable price...Mason should be commended for telling this tale in such a spirited and engaging manner."--*Jonathan Yeager*

"...excellent analysis of the complexities that result when political agendas, regional norms and interests, and theories on the proper role and limits of government all collide in the face of religious heterodoxy." -- *Church History*

"Overall, this book serves as a detailed model of the prevalence of religious intolerance not only in the history of the American South but also the history of the larger nation. *Mormon Menace* stands as a needed intervention to explore exactly how many anti-religious movements become defining features of American nationalism."--*Religion Matters*

"*Mormon Menace* makes several contributions...The lasting significance of *Mormon Menace*, I believe, will be in the timeless issues that Mason has identified as being at the heart of southern persecution against Mormons."--*BYU Studies Quarterly*

"Mason's volume stands as a valuable and rewarding contribution by any measure. Historians of the American South, American religions, and Mormonism will be grateful for it. Portions would work well in any undergraduate classroom, and it will provide graduate seminars in a variety of fields with rich conversation pieces.' --*Nova Religio*

"Mason's book models even-handed scholarship that is sensitive to both southerners and Mormons. It neither generalizes nor homogenizes its male subjects. Though less about Mormonism than American culture, this monograph makes a tremendous contribution to the vibrant field of Mormon studies. Moreover, given

Mormonism's re-emerging cultural presence and the ongoing negotiation of its cultural boundaries, this is a timely work that is likely to endure as a significant and learned assessment of accommodation and compulsion within the dynamic 'boundaries of American tolerance.'--*American Historical Review*

"Those troubled by the possibility of a Mitt Romney presidency invoked rhetoric of America as a Christian nation, differentiating between the fitness of Mormon and evangelical Christian candidates to lead the United States. Patrick Mason's *The Mormon Menace* arrived as a serendipitous entry into this debate, analyzing an important but largely unknown chapter in the long tradition of American anti-Mormonism...an especially powerful example of the tension between American belief and practice."--*Journal of Religion*

"*The Mormon Menace* is a nuanced investigation that will be of interest to historians of the South, scholars of Mormon studies, and those interested in intergroup conflict."--*The Historian*

"Well-written and assiduously researched...*The Mormon Menace* is an important book that should be read by scholars seeking a deeper understanding of the postbellum South."--*The Journal of the Southern History*

"This is a welcome addition to the growing literature on Mormonism, especially in light of what some have called the 'Mormon moment.'"--*Religious Studies Review*

About the Author

Patrick Q. Mason is Research Associate Professor at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies at the University of Notre Dame, and Associate Director for Research of an interdisciplinary research initiative entitled *Contending Modernities: Catholic, Muslim, Secular*.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Melvin Groth:

Here thing why this kind of The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South are different and reliable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good but it really depends in the content than it which is the content is as yummy as food or not. The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South giving you information deeper and different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no reserve that similar with The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South. It gives you thrill reading through journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing in which happened in the world which is perhaps can be happened around you. You can bring everywhere like in park, café, or even in your technique home by train. In case you are having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South in e-book can be your alternative.

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Ophelia Ellis:

Why? Because this The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap the item but latter it will surprise you with the secret the idea inside. Reading this book close to it was fantastic author who else write the book in such incredible way makes the content inside easier to understand, entertaining way but still convey the meaning completely. So , it is good for you for not hesitating having this any more or you going to regret it. This amazing book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book include such as help improving your skill and your critical thinking technique. So , still want to postpone having that book? If I ended up you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Stephanie Carter:

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