

in American history. It is an important advance in our understanding of Mormonism and a key entry in the expanding world of the interpretive, contextual school of Mormon studies. More broadly, the book calls us to consider questions of canon well beyond just the sacred anthology we call Bible.

Note

1. Hugh B. Brown, *Profile of a Prophet* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1955).

Mormons, Southerners, and American Assimilation

Patrick Q. Mason, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2011. 264 pp. Notes, index. Hardcover: \$29.95. ISBN 13: 978-0-19-974002-4

Reviewed by Mark Brown

Patrick Mason has recently been named to the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont University. He was granted a Ph.D. from the University of Notre Dame; and his dissertation, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry Mob," examined violence against religious minorities and outsiders in the post-bellum American South. This book builds upon that research, and it also expands the narrative to include the legal, theological, and cultural objections to Mormonism in the Old Confederacy in the generation following the Civil War and Reconstruction. The book focuses primarily on the causes and patterns of violence against Mormons but also includes a chapter that treats problems encountered by other religious minorities.

While Mormonism is often thought to be a uniquely American faith, *The Mormon Menace* demonstrates conclusively, repeatedly, and in great detail just how offensive the Latter-day Saint faith was to Americans in the late nineteenth century, especially to southern Americans. A Southern Baptist official said: "It [Mormonism] incarnates every unclean beast of lust, guile, falsehood,

murder, despotism, and spiritual wickedness" (103). This book situates the American response to Mormonism in the aftermath of the Civil War and illuminates how residents of Dixie and Deseret, though separated by thousands of miles, influenced the way Americans saw themselves. This is not so much a Mormon history as an American history. It explores questions of religious freedom, vigilantism, federalism, and the role of the state in defining marriage and regulating sexual behavior.

Although the description of violence might be discomfiting to many readers, it is impossible to tell the story of Mormonism's encounter with the post-bellum South without it. The first two chapters relate the harrowing details of the murder of Elder Joseph Standing at Varnell's Station, Georgia, and the murders of Elders William Berry and John Gibbs, along with a local member, Martin Conder, at Cane Creek, Tennessee. Local newspapers printed articles encouraging and justifying the violence. Mason explores the causes of the murders against the backdrop of polygamy and the particular phenomenon of Southern honor, whereby men are bound to defend the sanctity of the Christian home and the chastity of white women:

In the nineteenth century, honor was a defining concept for most Americans, holding particular sway in the South and West. Honor was a socially constructed characteristic in which the collective estimation of the community dictated the social reputation of each individual. . . . When a man's honor was impugned, it was imperative that he confront the aggressor in order to save face. . . . In serious cases, violence against the offender was often the only way to restore lost honor. . . . No insult to a man's honor was more egregious, and thus more deserving of a violent response, than a serious imputation on the character of a close female relative. . . . The violent enforcement of honor was thus a powerful means of social control in which both southern law and custom asserted that the family, particularly the wife and her sexuality, was the exclusive preserve of the male head of household (5).

Itinerant LDS missionaries came into this milieu spreading a religion that practiced plural marriage and taught a doctrine of gathering. When people converted, they often went west; and when a woman or girl of marrying age joined the Restoration and left her home, her male relatives were duty-bound to save her from a fate worse than death. The sexual insecurity of southern

men was already in play after the Emancipation, in the form of the specter of the recently freed male African slave:

One result of emancipation was that blacks were free to wander the countryside at will, a fearful image for many white men who projected their own longtime sexual abuses of black women onto their black counterparts. This translated into largely irrational fears that political liberty for blacks would also lead to unrestrained sexual liberty, which meant that attacks on white women were imminent and must be stopped at all costs. Whites characterized blacks in various ways, but one of the common tropes was that they were uncivilized, savage brutes who would, without proper controls, descend into orgies of rape and murder, targeting in particular the innocent white women they lusted after. . . . Especially in the late 1880s and 1890s lynching became a primary means of controlling this “black beast rapist” and preventing him from carrying out his malevolent designs. (66–67)

Mormon missionaries without purse or scrip were a close second in these nightmares. Mason demonstrates how the charges of licentiousness and illicit sexual behavior that were often made against the elders served to bring hatred and violence upon them, even though the charges were without merit.

In later chapters we read about the theological objections to Mormons, and some of those objections are still current. It is interesting to see how the questions of whether America is a Christian nation and exactly what that means are still being answered. Mason gives insight into the way that the principle of federalism was understood by both Mormons and Southerners. Mormons thought the practice of plural marriage should be an issue best left to the individual states. Southerners, who a decade or so previously had ostensibly gone to war over the principle of states’ rights, decided that the federal government wasn’t so bad after all and succeeded in influencing the government to place restrictions upon the way Mormons practiced their faith. Mormons had to give up plural marriage and theodemocracy in order to become fully American; Southerners had to give up vigilantism and Jim Crow. The way the people of Old Confederacy approached Mormonism helped them to integrate back into citizenship in the new United States.

The chapter on other religious minorities is helpful because it looks at religious persecution without considering Mormons. The

persecution of black Christians, Jews, and Catholics provides insight into the violence that accompanied America's attempts at religious pluralism. It is especially interesting to learn that more Catholics were lynched in the South than any other group except black Christians—more than Mormons and Jews combined. However, the victims were Italians and Mexicans who, we can assume, were at least nominally Catholic, and their murderers were Irish Catholics. In these cases, at least, ethnicity and race appear to be more salient than religion, so the violence doesn't technically qualify as religious persecution.

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. Readers are reminded that the skirmishes over religious freedom and individual rights are not settled and really never have been. In addition, we also see fascinating hints at several other avenues of fruitful research that lie beyond the scope of this book, including the way that the experiences of missionaries in the Southern States Mission shaped the way the Church related to the rest of the United States in later years, the influence of Southern converts on the Utah church, and the way young men's mission experience informed their leadership in later years when they served in the leading quorums of the Church.

Can Mormonism Have a Systematic Theology?

Charles R. Harrell. *"This Is My Doctrine": The Development of Mormon Theology*. Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, 2011. xii, 583 pp., index, chapter endnotes. \$34.95. ISBN 1589581032

Reviewed by Matthew Bowman

This is a wide-ranging and detailed book, consisting of an extensive examination of a wide variety of topics in Mormon theology from the time of scripture to the present. Harrell announces his methodology in the first chapter: "Theology: A Divine-Human Enterprise." He wants to examine "how LDS doctrines taught to-