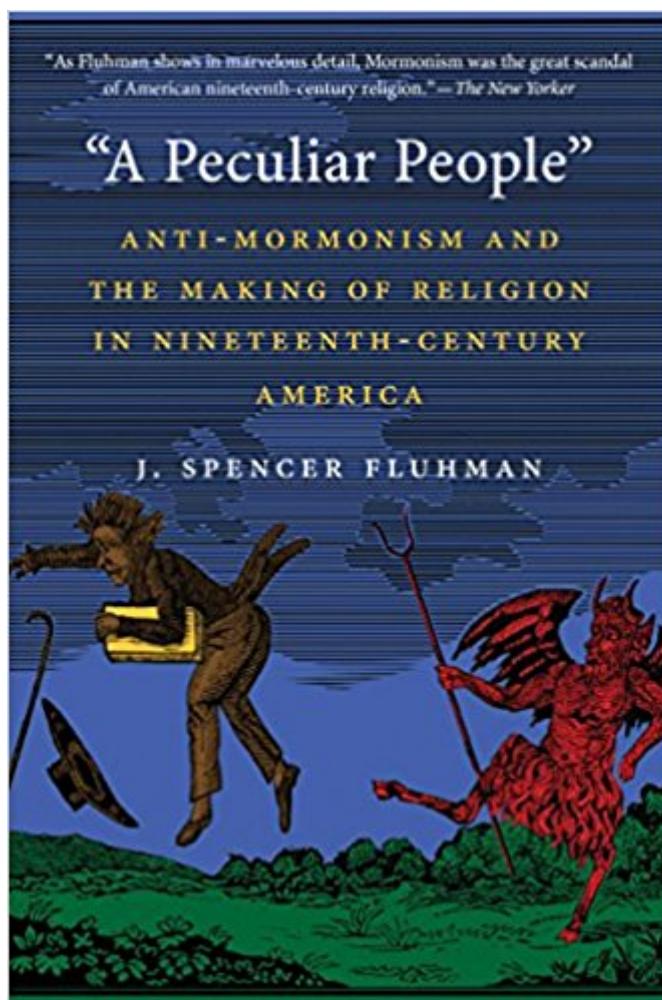


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# "A Peculiar People": Anti-Mormonism And The Making Of Religion In Nineteenth-Century America



## Synopsis

Though the U.S. Constitution guarantees the free exercise of religion, it does not specify what counts as a religion. From its founding in the 1830s, Mormonism, a homegrown American faith, drew thousands of converts but far more critics. In "A Peculiar People", J. Spencer Fluhman offers a comprehensive history of anti-Mormon thought and the associated passionate debates about religious authenticity in nineteenth-century America. He argues that understanding anti-Mormonism provides critical insight into the American psyche because Mormonism became a potent symbol around which ideas about religion and the state took shape. Fluhman documents how Mormonism was defamed, with attacks often aimed at polygamy, and shows how the new faith supplied a social enemy for a public agitated by the popular press and wracked with social and economic instability. Taking the story to the turn of the century, Fluhman demonstrates how Mormonism's own transformations, the result of both choice and outside force, sapped the strength of the worst anti-Mormon vitriol, triggering the acceptance of Utah into the Union in 1896 and also paving the way for the dramatic, yet still grudging, acceptance of Mormonism as an American religion.

## Book Information

Paperback: 240 pages

Publisher: The University of North Carolina Press; Reprint edition (August 1, 2014)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1469618850

ISBN-13: 978-1469618852

Product Dimensions: 6.1 x 0.6 x 9.4 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 4 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #173,947 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #201 in Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Mormonism #977 in Books > History > World > Religious > Christianity #7146 in Books > History > Americas > United States

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Fluhman's book goes beyond the usual treatments of anti-Mormonism. . . . A stimulating discussion of the course of religion in America. This review can only hint at the richness of Fluhman's interpretive work.--The Annals of IowaHelp[s] flesh out the nineteenth-century changes and trajectories in Mormon identity and experience.--American Studies JournalAn eye-opening exposure.--Nova ReligioFluhman has successfully captured the dynamic process of

nineteenth-century religious otherness by crafting a wonderfully entertaining, illuminating, and concise book.--Register of the Kentucky Historical SocietyDeeply researched, smartly written and argued.--Fides et HistoriaGeneral readers interested in American religious history will find this a worthwhile read.--Library JournalRecommended. All levels/libraries.--ChoiceA comprehensive history of anti-Mormon thought.--American Catholic Studies NewsletterLaudably concise without sacrificing rigor. . . . Both reveals and underscores the importance of anti-Mormon discourse in the nineteenth-century American (mis-)understanding of religion.--Journal of Church and StateThis excellent book deserves a wide audience and offers much to those interested in religion and identity, the nineteenth century, the American West, and intellectual and cultural history.--American Historical ReviewAn important work to the growing field of historical treatments of anti-Mormonism . . . I wholeheartedly recommend Fluhman's excellent volume.--Journal of Mormon HistoryThis inquiry into how American Protestants came to define religion is an exceptional and well-researched study, one I can highly recommend.--Utah Historical QuarterlyImpressive and thorough.--H-Net ReviewsThe world needs more books like Fluhman's deft account of nineteenth-century anti-Mormon literature and the fascinating American dialogues about religion that anti-Mormonism produced. Interdisciplinarity and historicity thrive simultaneously in "A Peculiar People," and Fluhman's marvelously succinct book as much elevates him as a historian of synoptic breadth as it uplifts his subject.--Journal of Interdisciplinary HistoryFew books deserve to be longer. This is one of them. . . . A must-read for anyone seriously interested in the study of American religion.--Journal of American HistoryAs Fluhman shows in marvelous detail, Mormonism was the great scandal of American nineteenth-century religion.--The New Yorker

A pleasure to read. Fluhman's deeply researched work explores the tangled relationship between anti-Mormon and Mormon histories with a degree of thoroughness and comprehensiveness never before achieved.--Amanda Porterfield, Florida State UniversitySpencer Fluhman has read widely and eclectically, probing the portraits of Mormons that emerged primarily from the pens of critics and sometimes from ham-fisted defenders. This book brilliantly situates these polemics in religious history, exploring a rich vein of argument about the nature of religion in nineteenth-century America.--Sarah Barringer Gordon, University of Pennsylvania Law School

A novel and refreshing, perceptive and informative account and discussion of a highly controversial topic, anti-Mormonism. While I do not agree entirely with the author's points of view, it always generates the possibility of a lively discussion that is illuminating.

Fantastic! Carefully and eloquently written. The best academic treatment of the subject. I cant wait for his next book! A pleasure to read.

This book is well done and full of useful bibliography. Does a good job remaining neutral in tone. Would recommend!

The book arrived as promised, and in beautiful condition. It is a quality book, well-researched and well-written. It was so nice, my daughter took it.

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