



A Foreign Kingdom: Mormons and Polygamy in American Political Culture, 1852-1890

Christine Talbot

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The years from 1852 to 1890 marked a controversial period in Mormonism, when the church's official embrace of polygamy put it at odds with wider American culture. In this study, Christine Talbot explores the controversial era, discussing how plural marriage generated decades of cultural and political conflict over competing definitions of legitimate marriage, family structure, and American identity. In particular, Talbot examines "the Mormon question" with attention to how it constructed ideas about American citizenship around the presumed separation of the public and private spheres. Contrary to the prevailing notion of man as political actor, woman as domestic keeper, and religious conscience as entirely private, Mormons enfranchised women and framed religious practice as a political act. The way Mormonism undermined the public/private divide led white, middle-class Americans to respond by attacking not just Mormon sexual and marital norms but also Mormons' very fitness as American citizens.



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