

Introduction

In his book, *Religious Outsiders and the Making of Americans*, R. Laurence Moore describes movements that developed in the 19th century that were outside the traditional religious mainstream. Moore sought to describe how diverse American religion really was. America spawned numerous new religion groups on the margins of society. These groups ultimately became a part of American religious society and developed a strong American identity.

Summary

In his first chapter, Laurence Moore analyzes the social identity of the Mormon religion. The story of the Mormons or Latter-Day Saints was closely linked to America's great westward expansion during the 19th century. During this time period, Europeans who sought to understand America looked to Mormon founder Joseph Smith and his successor Brigham Young for clues to the nature of the American people. According to Moore, the social identity of the Mormons rested on a "highly schizophrenic set of relations with the American religion." In their speeches and writings, Mormon leaders used "superpatriotic" language that would still resonate with many modern-day Mormon Republicans. Despite their love of country, the same leaders made a habit of defying Government officials, preaching against the corruption of the American nation, and prophesying that the American people were going to face terrible destruction.

In 1862, Washington politicians began to enact legislative measures to suppress the Mormon practice of polygamy or plural marriage. Mormon leaders viewed these legislative measures as an attack on their identity and fought to preserve this practice under the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment. As a result, many Americans began to perceive the Mormons as "peculiar" or "different" due to their defense of polygamy.

Moore points out that the vast majority of 19th century Mormons did not practice polygamy. In fact, many Mormons found polygamy to be "distasteful." Also, those who did take multiple

wives rarely exhibited the "lascivious behavior made familiar in anti-Mormon literature."

According to Moore, plural wives were commonly the widowed or unmarried sisters of the original wife. However, the Mormon practice of polygamy constituted one key difference between 19th century Mormons and other Americans.

During the 19th century, the enemies of Mormonism argued that Mormons were both morally and ethically bankrupt. Still, Mormons were known for their outstanding work ethic. Similar to the New England Puritans, Mormons linked disciplined labor with religious duty. Historians have argued that the close cooperation and control of Mormon group life fit well with the individualistic ethic of Jacksonian America. Another American trait held by Mormons was their strong emphasis on self-reliance.

According to Moore, Mormons are different from other 19th century Americans because they claimed to be different. The Mormon Church came to be perceived as a movement clouded by secrets. Mormon leaders established a secret Council of Fifty which regularly sought to undermine the efforts of legal authorities. Moore emphasizes that Mormons often exaggerated their sufferings and attributed it to the fact that God's chosen people always suffered persecution. Thus, Mormons fed on their own persecution and suffering. In the 1830s, Mormon newspapers began to emphasize persecution. Over time, persecution became the distinctive badge of membership in the Mormon Church. Historians have pointed out that persecution was perhaps the only force that caused the new movement to survive and prosper.

According to one historical account, Mormons were more "American" than most Americans by the end of World War I. Early 20th century Mormons were patriotic, respected the law, loved the Constitution, and were obedient to political authorities. Differences existed between 19th century and 20th century Mormons. Once Utah became a state, Mormons "jettisoned those beliefs and practices which made their culture deviant and their neighbors stopped worrying about them."

However, the rhetoric of Mormon leaders also changed during the 20th century. Mormons learned to mute the rhetoric of deviance once used by Joseph Smith and began to talk less aggressively about the distinctiveness of their culture.

Despite changes in their identity, a tension still exists in America between Mormons and non-Mormons. Mormons have maintained a quality of sect-like behavior. Unlike many other religious groups, Mormons have shown little interest in ecumenism. Moore concludes that their "sense of difference" has become so strong that they have likely gained an ethnic as well as a religious identity. In choosing their identity, Mormons have created a central paradox. While they regard themselves as patriotic, hard-working typical Americans, they also regard themselves as being distinctly different from other Americans.

In the second chapter, Moore discusses the "Americanization" of the Catholic Church in the United States during the late 19th century. By the mid 19th century, the Roman Catholic Church was the largest denomination in America surpassing both the Methodists and Baptists. Like the Mormons, Catholics in America faced persecution from nativist organizations which were comprised of Protestants. Despite the ridicule and suffering, Catholics became a formidable force in the political landscape of America. Unlike the Mormons and some other outsider religious groups, the Catholic Church had an extremely high percentage of new immigrants. Moore stresses that immigrant Catholics brought with them a strong sense of cultural differences between Roman Catholicism and Protestantism as well as a strong sense of national identification to their mother country.

The Catholic Church in the United States struggled over the question of what it meant to be an American. A dispute between the Irish-born Archbishop of New York City, John Hughes, and the American-born Catholic convert, Orestes Brownson, helped to draw lines between the so-called "Americanizers" and "non-Americanizers." Brownson advocated that Catholics must become

Americanized. He believed that all Americans would become Catholics once Catholics stopped acting like immigrants. On the other hand, Hughes deeply resented Brownson's suggestion that immigrant Catholic clergy who kept their "foreign habits and manners" were not promoting the faith or turning Catholic immigrants into Americans. Moore claims that Hughes's anger at Brownson's suggestion, that native-born Americans had a more important role to play in shaping American society than the new immigrants, was not the reaction of an Irish nationalist but that of an American patriot. Hughes argued that the essence of Americanness did not reside in accepting norms created for them by native-born Protestants. In his view, Catholics need not be Americanized because they already were Americans.

The Hughes - Brownson dispute continued among Catholic leaders and became known as the "Americanist Controversy." Like Brownson, John Ireland, the Archbishop of St. Paul and the self-titled "Americanizer," believed that America's future was Catholic. Ireland's view did not define a party of American clerics by the end of the 19th century. Other Catholics sought to accommodate the American and Catholic traditions. Their goal was to determine the "proper fit between American and Catholic ideals."

The toughest issue that Catholic writers were forced to address was church-state separation. According to Moore, American Catholics were caught in a dilemma in which their religion required them to view the American system of separation of church and state as just plain wrong. Conservative Catholics were careful not to confuse love of country with love of God. In fact, they warned against "flaunting the American flag" and "promoting a false nationalism at the expense of a respect for religion." Despite the differences between the "Americanizers" and "non-Americanizers," Protestant writers reacted no more positively to the former than to the latter.

Moore concludes that it is not easy to determine who won the "Americanist Controversy." Although the "Americanizers" who represented the strongly positioned Irish clergy won most of the

battles, national and ethnic parishes remained important. While these parishes decreased numerically after World War I, the ethnic identifications of Polish, Irish, Italian, and Puerto Rican Catholics did not disappear in urban areas of the United States. Moore argues that the Catholic Church in the early 20th century became a patriotic vehicle for reinforcing "many of the least interesting and least sophisticated aspects of American society." Contrary to the views of some theologians, the Catholic Church in the United States did not only recently become a significant part of the American religious landscape. Its powerful position as the largest denomination has given Catholicism standing as one of America's national religions. Without a doubt, the Catholic Church and its members have played a large role in shaping American society, culture and her institutions.

Moore's third chapter focuses on the oldest religious outsider group, the American Jews. Jewish "outsiderhood" began hundreds of years before the first Jews settled in America. Central to the Jewish consciousness and experience was the belief that they were God's chosen people, and because they were chosen they suffered. For centuries in the Middle East, Jews were uprooted from their homes, contained in ghettos and faced severe persecution. Unlike other immigrant groups who made their home in America, Jews did not have to adjust suddenly to minority status.

American Jews found their new home to be a land of freedom because there was no feudalism in its past and because no legally established ghetto existed. Jews in America advanced both economically and socially in the United States. In its quest to survive, American Judaism was forced to embrace a radical model of extreme democratic congregationalism. With no national organization until 1885, the Jewish community had become split in its religious practices.

However, at the Rabbinical Conference in 1885, Jewish leaders adopted a platform to "Americanize" or reform Judaism. Reform leaders desired Jews to have a strong American identity. Moore notes that Reform Judaism's program of Americanization left Jewish worship looking more like a form of liberal Protestantism than what had been practiced in Europe. Not all Jews were

pleased with this Reform solution. Traditional Jews saw these reforms as an "abandonment of the essential aspects of Judaism."

Despite these changes, Moore emphasizes that one must conclude that Reform leaders were just as concerned with Jews staying Jewish as with their becoming American. He points out that the Reform movement is not to blame for the thousands of Jewish families who stopped being Jewish during the 19th century. In order to climb the social ladder, many Jews shed their traditional garb and married Christians. However, many Reform Jews found success in America.

Between 1877 and 1920, the number of Jews increased from 250,000 to over 3 million in the United States. Many of these new immigrants came from Eastern Europe and found Reform Judaism to be an entirely different religion. As a result, hundreds of Orthodox synagogues popped up all across the country.

Moore notes that anti-Semitism played a strong role in shaping the Jewish consciousness. During this period, Jewish organizations were established to combat anti-Semitism and to maintain the boundaries of ethnic identity. Similar to the Mormons, American Jews memorialized their persecution "as much to speak to the conscience of other Jews as to persuade or inform others." More and more Jews began to believe that they were not set apart by God. As a result, Zionism began to fill the void left in the Jewish consciousness. Zionists supported a Jewish homeland in Palestine. Many of the first Zionists such as Louis Brandeis and Felix Frankfurter were nonreligious Jewish intellectuals. Moore concludes that so long as American Jews debate questions of Jewish identity, they will not lack for one.

In the fourth chapter, Moore tackles the Christian Science movement and its teachings about the efficacy of spiritual healing. The teachings and biblical interpretations of founder Mary Baker Eddy form the foundation of the movement. In an effort to undermine Eddy's movement, her allegiance to sound democratic and Christian principles was called into question by 19th century

authors. As with the Mormons and spiritualists, Eddy's teachings were dubbed to be part of the "occult." Eddy's opponents argued that the very name Christian Science was misleading because the movement was neither Christian nor scientific. Moore describes Christian Science as a break in history, as a church utterly distinct from all existing churches. Unlike other successful religious outsiders such as the Mormons and Shakers, Christian Science was primarily an urban movement, first launched in Boston.

Despite her best efforts, Eddy was not able to improve the image of Christian Science. While not thoroughly "cultic," Moore points out that Eddy's movement included several important features of occult systems. However, Eddy consistently denounced occultism and insisted that none of its characteristics applied to her movement. Even so, Christian Science was a secret society of sorts. Eddy divided her classes of instruction into stages of "spiritual advancement" which looked to outsiders like ritual initiation. She kept her "students" coming back for more "spiritual advancement" by promising to share important secrets concerning healing of the sick. Those who advanced to Eddy's inner circle were forced to take a vow of secrecy.

According to Moore, Eddy's reputation for deviance was not based on her healing powers but instead on her belief in the power of the mind to cause harm. This mental power to cause pain, disease, and death in another human was labeled by Eddy as "malicious animal magnetism." Bostonians found this belief to be suspiciously similar to the belief that led to the Salem Witch Trials. Her openness to the press about malicious animal magnetism caused much ridicule from the public.

Though highly controversial and despite her claims to the contrary, Eddy's teachings were not original. In 1893, visiting Hindu professors at the World Parliament of Religions pointed to the striking similarities between "the fundamental principles of modern Christian Science and those of that ancient system of philosophy known in India as Vedanta." Eddy was not interested in "making

common cause" with other religious leaders who claimed to see spiritual meanings behind material reality. In fact, those within the movement who sought to make modifications to doctrine were forced out of the church.

Like with Joseph Smith and other religious outsiders, the themes of pain, suffering, and opposition were central to Eddy's writings. One of her critics stated that "Mrs. Eddy had a perfect mania for trying to connect up every event of her life with some striking event in the life of Christ." Victorian women such as Eddy were quite familiar with "literature of martyrdom." According to Moore, Eddy's life story can be accurately told as triumph over adversity. After establishing the Christian Science movement and writing for many publications, Eddy died in 1910 as a wealthy, influential woman.

Moore stresses that in order for Eddy's organization to survive, she had to make sharp differentiations between herself and everyone else. As a result, Eddy faced severe ridicule due to her distinct nature and occult-like practices. By the end of the 19th century, Christian Scientists accounted for less than one percent of the American population. In Moore's opinion, becoming a Christian Scientist was not in itself a typical or frequent occurrence among Americans, but it was "an altogether normal solution to the problem of the emotional dissatisfactions of everyday American life." Moore argues that despite her shortcomings and inability to reflect on the social and psychological causes of her own distress, Mary Baker Eddy's movement should not be dismissed. He concludes that while Christian Science did not cure cancer it did cure "many maladies that were a lot more common among American women and men."

In his fifth chapter, entitled "Premillennial Christian Views of God's Justice and American Injustice," Moore discusses the political implications of religion within three different premillennial movements. These include the Seventh-day Adventists, the Jehovah's Witnesses, and the Pentecostals. Moore argues that premillennialism in the 20th century has encouraged "an

indifference to politics, outright hostility toward schemes of social and economic reform, or support for legislation advanced by the so-called ‘moral majority.’” Throughout the chapter, Moore attempts to explain why politically radical tendencies present in 19th century premillennialism disappeared in later years especially after World War I.

One such popular premillennial group which emerged in antebellum America was the Seventh Day Adventists. The Adventists were heavily influenced by the controversial teachings of William Miller who predicted that Christ would return to Earth in October, 1844. Led by Ellen White, the Adventists organized in the 1850s and continued to stress Christ’s imminent return. Due to the efforts of American legislative proposals to enforce a uniform national Sabbath in the late 19th century, Adventists believed that the United States like all other secular institutions would face awful judgments upon Christ’s return. White frequently spoke of God’s wrath upon American society, but without denying the Adventists a special role in the coming millennium. Eventually, according to Moore, the Adventist movement softened their rhetoric and embraced the American way of life.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses were another popular premillennial movement. Based on the teachings of Charles Taze Russell, the Witnesses or “Russellites” rejected the doctrine of the Trinity and believed that only 144,000 followers of Christ would make it to heaven. Witnesses refused to participate in the military, vote or hold office, and salute the American flag. Like the Mormons, Witnesses faced persecution for their unorthodox beliefs and made persecution essential to their religious identity. Between World War I and the early 1960s, Witnesses promoted causes of extreme right-wing politics including anti-Semitism and anti-Communism. Meanwhile, Witnesses were associated with left-leaning organizations like the ACLU due to their refusal to pledge allegiance to the American flag. However, the Witnesses cannot be understood with conventional

political terms such as liberal or conservative. According to Moore, their resistance to unjust laws was a way of strengthening their commitment, not a strategy of social reform.

Pentecostals were a third important premillennial group during this period. Partially imported from England and adopted by America's most popular revivalists, Pentecostalism recruited socially disadvantaged men and women. Pentecostal churches tore down many of the social barriers that existed in other Protestant denominations. Women were allowed to preach and many Pentecostal services were interracial. Like the Adventists and Witnesses, Pentecostals were resistant to extreme patriotism. Moore notes that Pentecostals did not believe that the "world's ills could be eliminated by political action." However, after World War I, Pentecostals changed their anti-war tone and began to preach against evolution, Communism, and Catholicism. Pentecostals turned their backs on egalitarianism, rejected interracial congregations, and wrapped themselves in the American flag. Like the present-day Adventists and Witnesses, Pentecostal preachers continue to encourage a "right of center political posture."

In his conclusion, Moore seeks to explain why these three movements have taken on a "right-of-center political philosophy" contrary to their origins which taught to view the American political order as irreversibly unjust. Moore argues that conservative social principles always dominated premillennialist teachings. He notes that many premillennialists have drifted toward conservatism due to their upward social mobility. The rise of 20th century modernism also caused premillennialists to accuse political liberals of "secularizing" institutions of higher learning.

Chapter six offers a look into the phenomenon known as Fundamentalism. In order to define "fundamentalism," Moore relies on the scholarship of George Marsden and Ernest Sandeen. According to Marsden, Fundamentalism grew out of a strong opposition to modernist theology. Biblical inerrancy, dispensational premillennialism, and a rejection of higher criticism were central

to the fundamentalist movement. The rhetoric of fundamentalists was far more militant and defensive than that of 19th century theological conservatives.

Nineteenth century theological conservatives were essentially apolitical. Despite their disapproval of beverage alcohol and Sabbath desecration, these conservatives “backed away from temperance and Sabbatarian legislation.” Moore points out that conservatives were not the ones who wanted to have Christ’s name written into the Constitution. Thus, their “religious struggle to enhance moral behavior did not become a political crusade.”

In the 20th century, opposition to moral legislation among Southern evangelicals broke down. Like 19th century theological conservatives, 20th century fundamentalists believed that American values were under attack. In response to this attack, led primarily by modernists, fundamentalists became much more involved in conservative politics. Moore points out that fundamentalists have contributed millions of dollars to defeat legislation concerning abortion, sex counseling, equal rights for women and homosexuals, and day-care centers for working mothers.

The Scopes Trial of 1925 played a prominent role in shaping the contemporary Fundamentalist consciousness. The showdown between Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan demonstrated the vast cultural split which existed between Fundamentalists and the rest of America. As a result of the trial, fundamentalists were labeled as anti-intellectual. The outcome of the Scopes Trial resulted in fundamentalists adopting an outsider identity. Fundamentalist leaders such as J. Frank Norris emphasized his role as a martyr victimized by persecution. Moore notes that this outsider identity or consciousness that developed among fundamentalists was a defensive reaction to intellectual insecurity. Furthermore, Moore stresses that fundamentalists, for the most part, did not suffer from the disabilities and persecution that initially prompted an outsider consciousness among other groups such as the Mormons.

Shortly after the Scope Trial, fundamentalists decided to go “underground.”

Fundamentalists such as J. Gresham Machen declared that they could no longer remain in denominations “controlled” by liberals. As a result, new separatist denominations, associations, and Bible colleges began to appear throughout the South. According to Moore, “fundamentalism settled at the fringes of American religion in the thirties, briefly reappeared in the popular religion of the intellectually feckless fifties, and then inexplicably became a major force in the 1970’s under the more respectable label of evangelicalism.” In Moore’s concluding thoughts, he points to theological conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s who desired respectability in the modern world. Figures such as Jimmy Carter, Mark Hatfield, and Jesse Jackson have demonstrated that a conservative Christian background, coupled with a strong sense of morality, does not always yield right-wing politics.

Moore’s seventh and final chapter assesses black culture and the black churches’ quest for autonomous identity during the late 19th and 20th centuries. Moore argues that due to a lack of black culture, American blacks were forced to develop an autonomous identity out of what their oppressors chose to give them. Blacks used their own autonomous identity to mold and shape Protestant Christianity into something far different than that preached at white churches across America. Black slaves regarded the United States as Egypt and the white man as Pharaoh. “Negro spirituals” were also central to their unique form of worship.

The independent church movement and outspoken religious leaders also helped to create a sense of autonomy and identity among American blacks. Moore argues that in order for blacks to succeed as an outsider group, they needed to develop strong forms of cultural identification to maintain group pride. One proposed solution was the Back-to-Africa movement. To the dismay of many northerners, most black churches after emancipation showed absolutely zero interest in the black nationalist movement.

Emancipation made it possible for blacks to create and organize their own churches and denominations without white control or surveillance. In these churches, black ministers preached black pride. In the 1960s the slogan “Black is Beautiful” was popular among black houses of worship. Nineteenth century blacks used their congregations to organize community affairs and meet other social needs. According to Moore, black churches which reached more black people than any other institution became the primary form of identification for American blacks.

Black leaders such as W.E.B. DuBois and Booker T. Washington struggled to debunk black stereotypes in order to build group pride. DuBois also sought to develop a strategy to “reconcile two tendencies that he believed pulled blacks in opposite directions – their blackness and their sense of being American.”

Twentieth century urbanization in cities such as New Orleans, Atlanta, Chicago, and Harlem gave blacks an opportunity to gather collectively in the streets for mass demonstrations. Marcus Garvey and Elijah Muhammad were two men who took advantage of black urbanization. Muhammad founded the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims) which became the most important new religious movement to emerge in America in the 20th century. Moore notes that the parallels between Joseph Smith’s Mormon Church and various black nationalist movements such as the Nation of Islam are striking. The influence of these movements caused much controversy in black Protestant churches. As a result of nationalist movements, black ministers began to tailor their sermons to emphasize the distinctiveness of black religion. James Cone and others argued that black Christianity and white Christianity were not the same thing.

Moore stresses that blacks have faced a harder time establishing a cultural identity than other people. This is because they have had to pretend that the black community shared a common culture “when virtually no institutions of common culture, save very congregational churches, had

existed to maintain and spread one.” Nevertheless, the black church can contend that it is the best example of the American dream.

In a postscript, Moore analyzes American religion as pluralism. Civil religion has not given Americans a religious consensus. Religious pluralism has functioned like James Madison suggested: on one group has overwhelmed the others. Moore debunks the idea that “mainline” means “normal” and “outsider” mean “not yet American. In reality, pluralism is normal and “producing novelty” is at the heart of the American religious system.

Conclusion

Laurence Moore provides an excellent introduction and analysis of religious groups normally considered to be on the margins of American society. Moore reveals the concerns that the majority of Americans had when they learned about these new movements. For example, Moore discussed the problem of polygamy and Mormonism and the antisocial implications of the Jehovah Witnesses attitudes about the government. Moore did an astounding job of revealing how groups that were born with strong social insecurities ultimately became Americanized. His chapter on the Americanization of Catholics was especially insightful.

Moore’s analysis in places is of course a bit dated in 2006. For example, his belief that theological conservatives do not have to be involved in right-wing politics is true. In the 2006 elections some evangelicals were concerned about the environment. Nevertheless, recent trends reveal that fundamentalists are perhaps even more politically radical than he envisioned. Moore is correct that religious outsiders of the 19th century eventually muted their rhetoric of deviance. However, several examples of extreme sectarianism still exist today. Cases of “sectarian” Mormon polygamy have made the national news in recent months. Some Pentecostal followers have become enamored with the health and wealth gospel that Pentecostal scholars usually look upon with disdain. Moore is correct, however, that these religious movements have generally become an

accepted part of America's religious system. It will be interesting to see if America's evangelicals will vote for Mit Romney, a devout Mormon and Governor of Massachusetts, in the upcoming 2008 Presidential Election. If they do, the distinction between religious outsider and mainline believer in American religion will be muted even more.

In sum, Moore has brought together in one text an analysis of many religious groups that have ultimately sought acceptance in American life. He correctly identified the birth of many new groups as being rooted in social insecurities. Yet, he demonstrated that this was to be expected in the context of pluralism. Consequently, he reveals that it is inaccurate to discuss these groups as simply "outsiders." Rather, he suggests that pluralism helps define the essence of "normal" voluntaristic American religion.