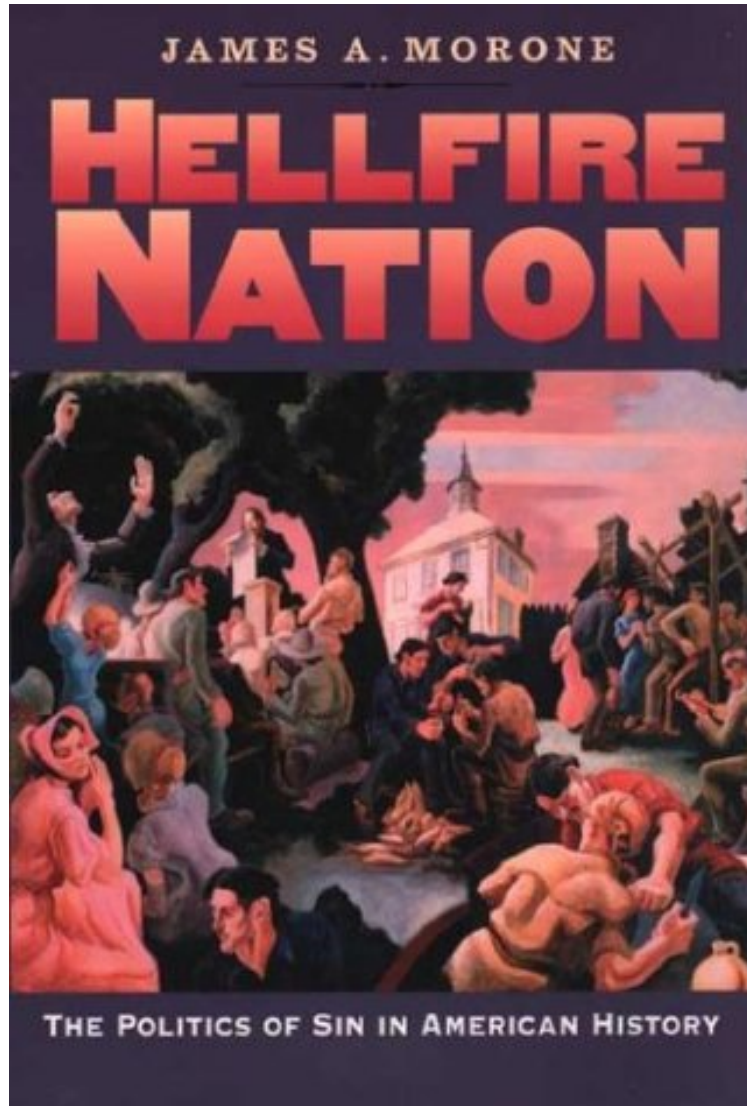


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Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History

James A. Morone

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James A. Morone : Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Hellfire Nation: The Politics of Sin in American History:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. America's Morality PlayBy Gregory J. Jemsek, authorMany people over the years have written about the influence of the Puritans. None of them, however, have drawn such a direct link from that influence to the way U.S. politics operates. That's a bit of a mystery since outside of the frontier itself, it is the Puritan "meta-narrative" that has most strongly shaped our excessively moralistic form of public debate. It's a meta-narrative that fuels itself through righteousness, and the author's emphasis on the Jeremiad as a weapon of that

righteousness is one of many potent insights he brings to this historical conversation. The Jeremiad's focus on generating fear reflects an American culture so afraid of difference - in any form - that hopes for a more communitarian future remain much dimmer here than in most other countries in the world. So if we're to rid ourselves of the ghost of Cotton Mather, the first step is recognizing how deeply he and his Puritan brethren have skewed our societal discourse: a step ably taken by Dr. Morone in this important and readable book.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An enjoyable look at the history of morality politics in AmericaBy Elizabeth T. SmithJames Morone traces the history of morality politics from the early colonial period to the present in this fascinating, lively book. Morone is a serious scholar on holiday here. History buffs will especially enjoy the author's marshaling of historical detail in his accounts of Puritan morality, prohibition, purity crusades and the undercurrents of xenophobia.Mirine's book ha a serious undercurrent as well. As a historical institutionalist, he sees morality politics as path dependent, that is, the pattern of morality politics developed in earliest colonial America has persisted to the present day with periodic alterations to address the exigencies of new eras.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Religion-based rageBy MinnesotanHow horrifying to be reminded of our own religion-based rage. Not just intolerance for vice, but a rage not that far from ISIS.

This insightful new conceptualization of American political history demonstrates thatdespite the clear separation of church and statereligion lies at the heart of American politics. From the Puritan founding to the present day, the American story is a moral epic, James Morone says, and while moral fervor has inspired the dream of social justice it has also ignited our fiercest social conflicts.From the colonial era to the present day, Americans embraced a Providential mission, tangled with devils, and aspired to save the world. Moral fervor ignited our fiercest social conflictsbut it also moved dreamers to remake the nation in the name of social justice. Moral crusades inspired abolition, woman suffrage, and civil rights, even as they led Americans to hang witches, enslave Africans, and ban liquor. Today these moral arguments continue, influencing the debate over everything from abortion to foreign policy.Written with passion and deep insight, Hellfire Nation tells the story of a brawling, raucous, religious people. Morone shows how fears of sin and dreams of virtue defined the shape of the nation.

From BooklistAlmost 60 years after Gunnar Myrdal argued that America's distinctive moral consciousness might prove "the salvation of mankind," Morone finds that same characteristic at least as likely to legitimate invidious discrimination as to inspire utopian strivings. As he probes the sermonizing style of moral politics that has so profoundly shaped America, Morone highlights two contrasting impulses: a Victorian censoriousness and a Social Gospel communalism. The narrative first traces the Victorian impulse--arising from Puritan fears of witchcraft and debauchery--as it inspires the fervor of nineteenth-century abolitionists and twentieth-century prohibitionists. Later, readers witness the emergence of a long nascent Social Gospel--springing from Puritan pledges of mutual love--as it stirs the visionary hopes behind the New Deal and the civil rights movement. Though a partisan of Social Gospel politics and a critic of Victorian conservatism, Morone illuminates the complexities in both impulses. Readers trying to peer into the nation's post-9/11 moral future will thank Morone for clarifying the path along which righteous fervor has already impelled us. Bryce ChristensenCopyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "In a beautifully written book, Morone has integrated the history of American political thought with a perceptive study of religion's role in our public life. Seeing the American story as a moral tale is always instructive, and Morone shows how it is impossible to grapple with our continuing effort to 'redeem and reform' ourselves absent an understanding of the nation's faith-communities. May Hellfire Nation encourage Americans to discover (or rediscover) the moral dreams that built a nation.E. J. Dionne Jr., syndicated columnist and author of Why Americans Hate Politics and They Only Look Dead