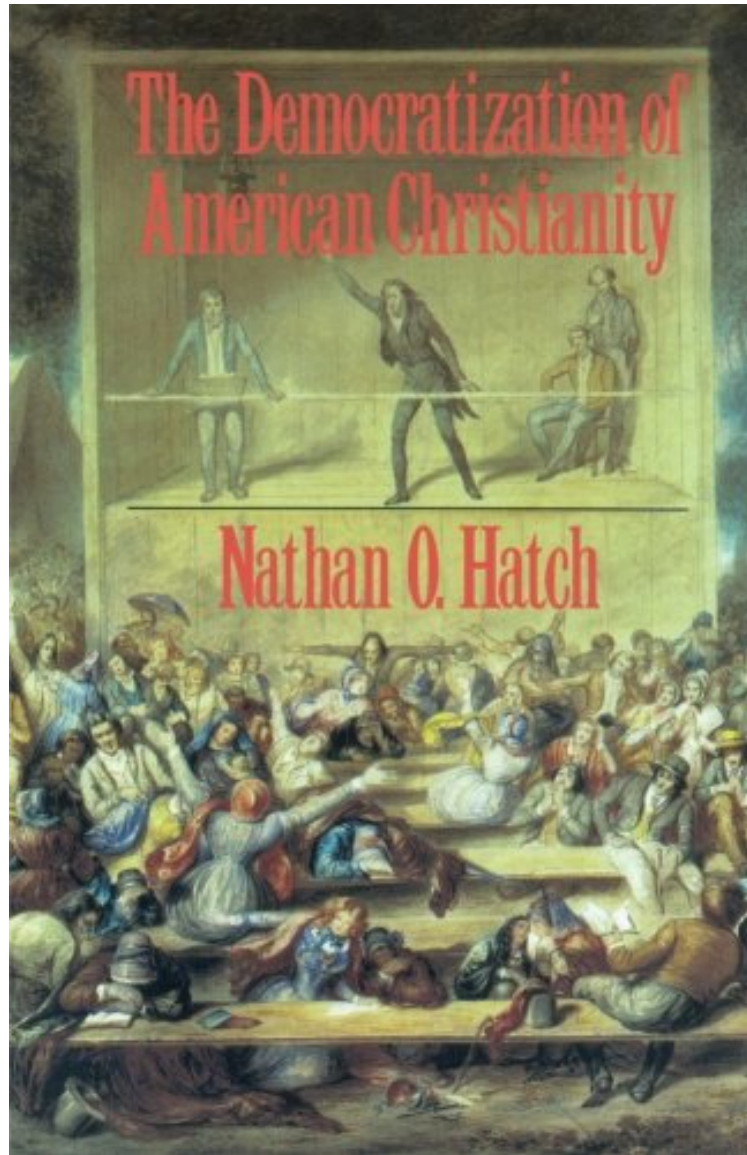


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The Democratization of American Christianity

Nathan O. Hatch

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Nathan O. Hatch : The Democratization of American Christianity before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Democratization of American Christianity:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Early America the enduring structures of American Christianity By Jonathan Andersen Nathan Hatch leaves little ambiguity as to what his seminal work is about as he opens with the line, "This book is about the cultural and religious history of the early American republic and the enduring structures of American Christianity." Hatch focuses the years between 1780 and 1830, a time he sees as a transitional period during

which foundations for the future structures of American Christianity were established. Hatch follows five mass religious movements that developed during this time. As Hatch develops the stories of these mass movements within an American atmosphere saturated with revival and revolution, he argues that "the theme of democratization is central to understanding the development of American Christianity." Readers discover that this shift towards democratization was greatly influenced by the politics of the time and ultimately led people to eschew religious authority in almost all its forms, emphasize the liberty of the individual Christian in matters of faith and conscience. The main points of Hatch's argument are revealed early on and are fleshed out as he engages various organizing themes. While this approach could bore the reader, his focus upon defined groups within one historical period leads the book to move forward with ease. Overall, I felt Hatch was persuasive. However, I believe he could improve his work by connecting the section headings he used to organize the book with greater clarity to each chapter's argument and by including more stories of women during this era given its equalizing impulse.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.
A Truly Remarkable Work
By Rodney Thomson
Hatch's seminal work on the Second Great Awakening and the impact of the establishment of democracy on Christianity in this country is an intriguing look at a critical period in the history of Christianity in America. If you have ever wondered why there are a virtually uncountable number of denominations/expressions of the Christian tradition in America, this book will describe the people and events that got that particular ball rolling. Hatch's presentation of the subject is extensive, yet his writing style makes it accessible even to those without scholarly bent, providing a read that is as gripping as it is educational. Cheers! - Rodney

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Very interesting Premise
By JNH
This book traces the rise of independent churches and church groups/denominations early in the 19th Century. It examines the reasons why those churches came into being and looks at the personalities at the forefront of those churches. I know this might spark a debate that I am not interested in getting into, but I don't agree that one group he examines (the Mormon Church) should be considered a Christian Church, but I do think its inclusion makes sense as the influences of the period that he considers gave rise to Mormonism as well as other cults or fringe Christian Churches.

In this prize-winning book Nathan O. Hatch offers a provocative reassessment of religion and culture in the early days of the American republic, arguing that during this period American Christianity was democratized and common people became powerful actors on the religious scene. Hatch examines five distinct traditions or mass movements that emerged early in the nineteenth century: the Christian movement, Methodism, the Baptist movement, the black churches, and the Mormons, showing how all offered compelling visions of individual potential and collective aspiration to the unschooled and unsophisticated. "Rarely do works of scholarship deserve as much attention as this one. The so-called Second Great Awakening was the shaping epoch of American Protestantism, and this book is the most important study of it ever published." James Turner, *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* "The most powerful, informed, and complex suggestion yet made about the religious, political, and psychic 'opening' of American life from Jefferson to Jackson. . . . Hatch's reconstruction of his five religious mass movements will add popular religious culture to denominationalism, church and state, and theology as primary dimensions of American religious history." Robert M. Calhoon, *William and Mary Quarterly* "Hatch's revisionist work asks us to put the religion of the early republic in a radically new perspective. . . . He has written one of the finest books on American religious history to appear in many years." James H. Moorhead, *Theology Today* The manuscript version of this book was awarded the 1988 Albert C. Outler Prize in Ecumenical Church History from the American Society of Church History Awarded the 1989 book prize of the Society for Historians of the Early American Republic for the best book in the history of the early republic (1789-1850) Co-winner of the 1990 John Hope Franklin Publication Prize given by the American Studies Association for the best book in American Studies Nathan O. Hatch is professor of history and vice president for Graduate Studies and Research at the University of Notre Dame.

From Publishers Weekly Hatch examines the Christian movement, the Methodists, the Baptists, the black churches and the Mormons in early America to show how powerful influence was often exerted by common people, thanks to the democratization of religion. Copyright 1991 Cahners Business Information, Inc. "Professor Hatch's amply documented study captures a wide range of the many-sided demands for equality and freedom that have characterized American Protestant Christianity, and the disdain for deference and patronage nowhere more so than among black preachers. . . . The Democratization of American Christianity constitutes vital reading for those who would understand just what experience of the United States has done to Christian belief and practice." Bryan Wilson, *Times Literary Supplement*