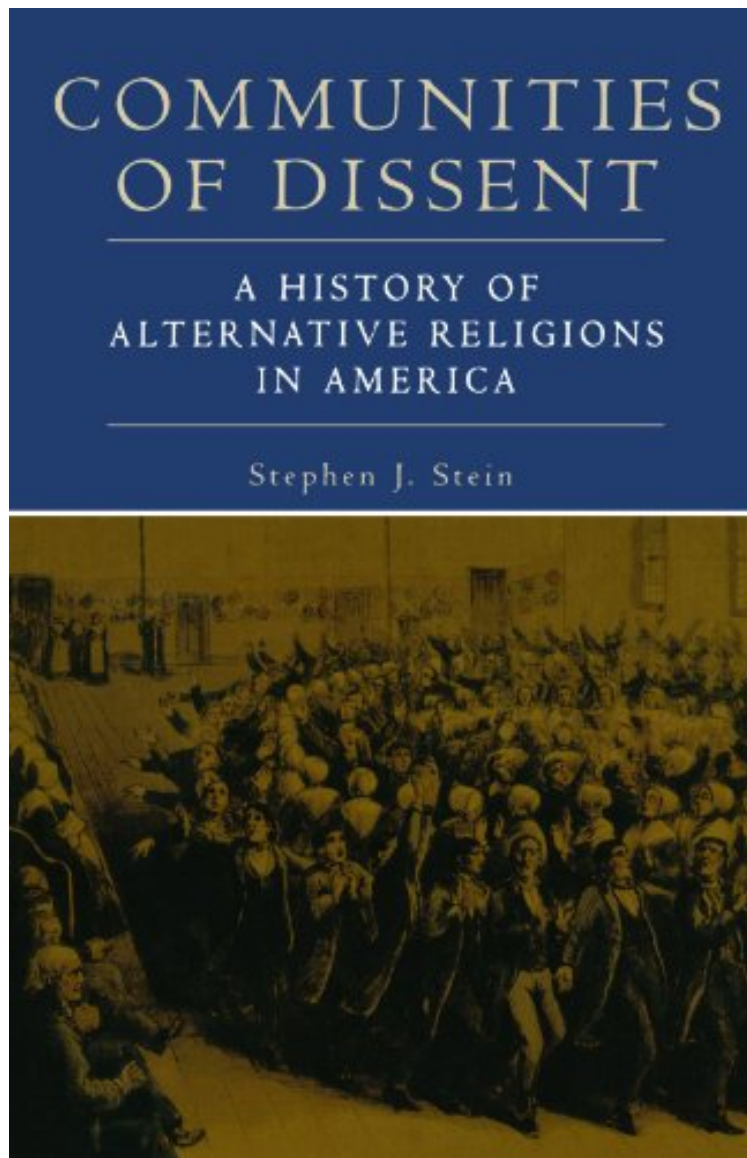


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## Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America (Religion in American Life)

*Stephen J. Stein*

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**Stephen J. Stein : Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America (Religion in American Life)** before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Communities of Dissent: A History of Alternative Religions in America (Religion in American Life):

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. An important study of motives in alternative American religions  
By S. Paulson  
I bought this book several years ago, and have discovered I use it as a go-to book to help explain to others how to deal with their reactions to 'others.' I don't think Stein intended this succinct book to serve as a comprehensive study on NRMs, but to focus on a basic concept that is essential for understanding them. Very glad to have this well-written presentation on such an important subject in this history of American religions.  
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By Kevin Corn  
I chose this book for a freshman class that I teach in American religion. The book is an intelligent and colorful history of the forces shaping the creative periphery of American religious life. Though short, it manages to tease out many of the key elements that connect religion to the larger American culture.  
0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars  
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Great quality and interesting read

Alternative religious groups have had a profound influence on American history—they have challenged the old and opened up new ways of thinking about healing, modes of meaning, religious texts and liturgies, the social and political order, and the relationships between religion and race, class, gender, and region. Virtually always, the dramatic, dynamic history of alternative religions runs parallel to that of dissent in America. *Communities of Dissent* is an evenhanded and marvelously lively history of New Religious Movements in America. Stephen J. Stein describes the evolution and structure of alternative religious movements from both sides: the critics and the religious dissenters themselves. Providing a fascinating look at a wide range of New Religious Movements, he investigates obscure groups such as the 19th-century Vermont Pilgrims, who wore bearskins and refused to bathe or cut their hair, alongside better-known alternative believers, including colonial America's largest outsider faith, the Quakers; 17th- and 18th-century Mennonites, Amish, and Shakers; and the Christian Scientists, Jehovah's Witnesses, Black Muslims, and Scientologists of today. Accessible and comprehensive, *Communities of Dissent* also covers the milestones in the history of alternative American religions, from the infamous Salem witch trials and mass suicide/murder at Jonestown to the positive ways in which alternative religions have affected racial relations, the empowerment of women, and American culture in general.

"Clearly presented material... [The religious groups'] ideas, organizational structure, and beliefs and practices are described in a readable narrative style.... Enough detail is included to give a clear understanding of the practices and ideas that have made each group unique.... The tone throughout is nonjudgmental and the emphasis is on people and their ideas. Black-and-white photos and reproductions add information and perspective to the presentation."--School Library Journal  
"A fair and balanced treatment of a wide range of alternative traditions in America. The prose is very readable and the vocabulary is well within the range of junior or senior high school students."--Religious Studies in Secondary Schools  
"Primary source inserts for each chapter and an abundance of period illustrations move the discussion along."--Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books  
"Exactly what the title says: a survey of Quakers, Christian Scientists, Mormons, and Jehovah's Witnesses, among many others.... One unique aspect of Stein's work is how he shows the connection between the rise of some of these alternative religious groups and how they affected racial relations and the growing liberation and empowerment of women. This feature alone makes the book worthwhile."--Reformation Revival  
"Stephen J. Stein's sampling of early American church history, *Communities in Dissent*, focuses on forms of Christianity not widely embraced. Not surprisingly, people who embraced these expressions of faith were often ridiculed and persecuted." -- The Houston Chronicle  
About the Author  
Stephen J. Stein is a professor of religious studies at Indiana University. His books include *Jonathan Edwards's Writings: Text, Context, Interpretation*, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers*, and *The Encyclopedia of Apocalypticism: Apocalypticism in the Modern Period and the Contemporary Age* (editor).