

Religious fanaticism in the kingdom of matthias

[History](#), [American History](#)



\n[toc title="Table of Contents"]\n

\n \t

1. [The False Prophet](#) \n \t
2. [The Hatred of Women](#) \n \t
3. [Women Subjugation](#) \n \t
4. [Conclusion](#) \n

\n[/toc]\n \n

The False Prophet

Religion is something that is strongly rooted in the American society. The Kingdom of Matthias is a story about the rise and fall of a religious cult; the Patriarchal Kingdom of Truth narrated by Sean Wilentz and Paul Johnson with the former being a don at the Princeton University and he later at the University of South Carolina. The story takes place in the period of the “Second Great Awakening” which saw spiritual fanaticism and even delusions take hold in America. A number of cults and sects inclusive of the Pentecostalism Adventism spread. At the beginning of the story, there is Elijah Pierson; an individual from a humble background who later relocated to New York. Being a staunch religious guy, he viewed the residents of New York as being immoral. For instance, many of the individuals were drunkards and prostitution was very rampant. Pierson viewed himself as an evangelist and as such, he began spreading spiritual messages in New York. His style and charismatic nature won him a lot of followers as many saw him as a prophet. His wife Sarah passed on and he tried to resurrect her all to no avail. As a result, he lost trust in God because he believed he had the power

like the apostles of the Bible in raising the dead. The story revolves around the major character the self-proclaimed prophet of God Robert Matthews known as “Matthias” the Folgers; the young and handsome Benjamin and the seductive Ann, Isabella Van Wanegan, a renowned abolitionist and early defender of women’s rights, Margaret Mathews; wife of Matthias and Isabella Matthias the daughter of Matthias.

In writing Kingdom of Matthias, the two authors apply the approach of memoirs and stories from other authors such as Margaret Mathews and Gilbert Vale to come up with a raw narrative verve. Although they did acknowledge that the sources were biased because they involved individuals who were very closely related to the main characters in the book. The Kingdom of Matthias falls under the genre of religious history which covers the historical developments in religion. The book is a philosophical thriller that teases out the historical and cultural implications of the “Second Great Awakening” and narrates how the charismatic fraudulent religious hucksters such as Robert Matthews Matthias find their ways into the hearts and minds of the poor confused individuals by offering them something they can wholeheartedly believe in; false hope anchored in religious indoctrination. Not to mention, Matthias made his male followers believe that women are devils who are out to separate them from God.

The Hatred of Women

It is interesting to note that one of the major subjects advanced in the book is the hatred of women. The authors implicitly and explicitly narrate Matthews’ bizarre theology of the foundation of women prejudice. The

authors present a historical argument that the Strict Scottish Calvinist community shaped the patriarchal nature of Matthias. In the community, Patriarchy was highly favored with all the church elders being men and fathers having an unprecedented right of leading families in prayer and had absolute authority in their homes. However, the evangelical movement started de-constructing the role of the father while in the process accentuating the mother as both a teacher and household leader. Matthew together with his male followers felt threatened by this movement and they responded by physically asserting their authorities. This can be evidenced from the fact that Mathews frequently whipped his wife Margaret and he even got a jail term of 30 days for beating his daughter Isabella. Mathews created a delusion of the women being temptresses and devils who led good men astray. Not to mention, Matthias believed that men had the power to define how women should dress, what they should eat and even their sexual life. Moreover, he strongly believed in the subjugation of women and for him and his male followers, women only existed as sexual objects for the men and to cook, clean and take care of the children.

Women Subjugation

Additionally, throughout the story, the authors also cover the subject of women subjugation. Since the story is based in the US and it is in the early 1800s, it reflects the struggles of the women especially black women in the American society. Many of the black American women served as slaves and sexual objects for men in the United States and the situation was further worsened by the spread of spiritual fanaticism that viewed them as the unprecedented head of the family. The woman was left at the “mercy” of

the man. The self-proclaimed prophet of God ruled with an iron fist and he physically abused the women around him as he pleased. For instance, he physically abused his wife and daughter and robbed Benjamin of his wife Anne. As such, the conditions for women in the patriarchal society were cruel and distressing; women knew no better than their husbands and fathers. The history of Pierson and Matthias is quite different that even though Pierson had his own following he believed that relatively women had the same rights as men. Though not mentioned, this is likely to be the major reason why he wanted to raise his spouse from the dead. This story captures the moment when people especially women turned to religion evangelism to save them from the oppression in the society.

On the other hand, it is ironical that Matthias preached to his followers that women had the power to lead men astray from God. First, Matthias was successfully seduced by Anne Folger a wife to Benjamin Folger. Instead of d refusing the attempts of Anne, Matthias even proclaimed that Anne was his match spirit and as such her marriage to Benjamin was nullified. This reveals the egocentric and selfish nature of Matthias; he only cares about himself and his needs. The position taken by Matthias is contrary to his nature at the start where he frequently whips his wife Margaret and later jailed for beating up his daughter Isabella. Even more, this iron fist rule of Matthias led to Benjamin sleeping with Isabella as a payback for what Matthias had done to him. Matthias forced to marry arguing that they were “ match spirits” despite the fact that Isabella was already married to Charles Laisdell.

Conclusion

In Conclusion, the book is a narrative of religious fanaticism and how the church has propagated the patriarchal model that states that a woman's function is to take care of her home and submit to her husband. Infidelity, especially from the woman's side, was not tolerated at all and the increasing power that religious leaders have on their followers. For instance, Matthias had the power to dissolve marriages as he pleased. Even more, the book explores the issue of sex among followers considering the fact Matthias and his male followers had various sexual encounters with young female followers. The story also indicates how sex encounters have brought down great leaders who have to deal with sexual accusations leveled against them.