



When Men Become Gods: Mormon Polygamist Warren Jeffs, His Cult of Fear, and the Women Who Fought Back

By Stephen Singular

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In *When Men Become Gods*, *New York Times* bestselling author Stephen Singular casts a light on a dark corner of religious extremism. He reveals a group of fundamentalists operating in the present-day United States, where teenage girls are kept in virtual bondage in the name of upholding the “sacred principle” of polygamy.

As the leader and self-proclaimed prophet of the Fundamentalist Latter Day Saints, a sect of Mormonism based in isolated southern Utah, Warren Jeffs held sway over thousands of followers for nearly a decade. His rule was utterly tyrannical. In addition to coercing young girls into polygamous marriages with older men, Jeffs reputedly took scores of wives, many of whom were his father’s widows. Television, radio, and newspapers were shunned, creating a hidden community where polygamy was prized above all else.

But in 2007, after a two-year manhunt that landed him on the FBI’s Ten Most Wanted List, Jeffs’s reign was forcefully ended. He was convicted of rape as an accomplice for his role in arranging a marriage between a fourteen-year-old girl and her nineteen-year-old first cousin.

In *When Men Become Gods*, Edgar Award nominee Stephen Singular traces Jeffs’s rise to power and the concerted effort that led to his downfall. It was a movement championed by law enforcement, private investigators, the Feds, and perhaps most vocal of all, a group of former polygamous wives seeking to liberate young women from the arranged marriages they’d once endured. The book offers new revelations into a nearly impenetrable enclave---a place of nineteenth-century attire, inbreeding, and eerie seclusion---providing readers with a rare glimpse into a tradition that’s almost a century old, but that has only now been exposed.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

This ripped-from-the-headlines exposé uncovers the rise and fall of polygamist Warren Jeffs, former leader of the Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS). Based on interviews with ex-members, newspaper stories and trial records, it provides a raw and bracing account of Jeffs's sex crimes and fugitive years. Unfortunately, Singular's account is not burdened by nuance or significant attention to history or theology, ignoring important prior research on Mormon fundamentalism and painting all polygamists with the same broad brush. Some of this could be forgiven if Singular's lapses in understanding Mormon fundamentalism were not exacerbated by his frequent tactic of comparing the FLDS to Islamic extremists, which evokes the intended fear response but remains tenuous. However, the book's second half, which hews closely to the chronology of Jeffs's flight from the law and the individuals who helped to bring him to justice, is more balanced than the first. Singular is a strong writer who uses pacing, dialogue and drama to good effect. Readers will find this a troubling and fascinating, if careless, account. (*May*)

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From [Booklist](#)

As president, prophet, seer, and revelator of the Hildale, Utah-based Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS), Warren Jeffs sought to preserve the perquisites of office and the religious practices he inherited from his father and predecessor in office, Rulon Jeffs. His interstate flight to avoid prosecution on charges related to arranging plural marriages between adult men and underage girls (some of them first cousins) in his congregation threatened to disrupt his plans in a big way. Eventually apprehended and convicted of being an accessory to rape, Jeffs resigned his church offices. Singular takes us into Jeffs' world and the two-year manhunt for him throughout FLDS territory in southern Utah, in which nineteenth-century attire and inbreeding were the rule. In bringing Jeffs to justice, prosecutors first had to gain access to the isolated, reclusive people of Jeffs' empire. They were aided in this by a heroic group of women who left plural marriages and sought to liberate other young women from them, and this story is their absorbing story, too. --Mike Tribby

Review

Praise for Stephen Singular

"A gripping and chilling tale . . . A solid account that will both fascinate and horrify."

---*Publishers Weekly* on *Unholy Messenger*

"A chilling examination of American-born right-wing terrorism."

---*Chicago Tribune* on *Talked to Death*

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