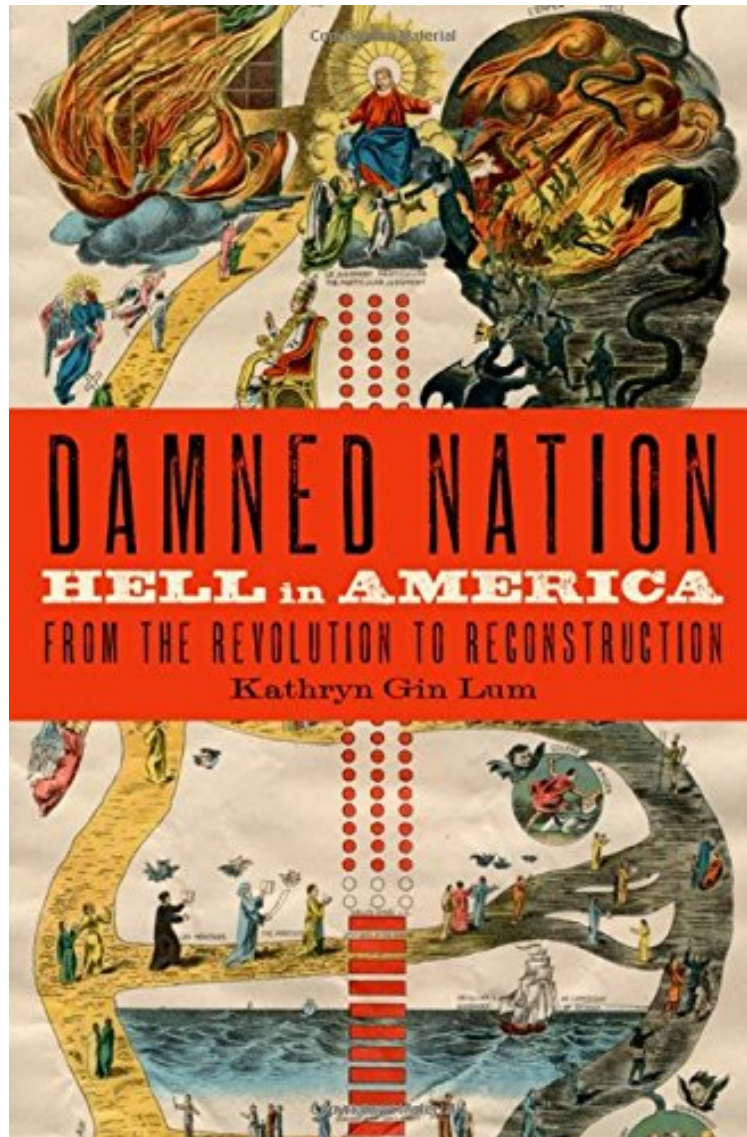


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Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction

Kathryn Gin Lum

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Kathryn Gin Lum : Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Damned Nation: Hell in America from the Revolution to Reconstruction:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. A Compelling StudyBy GregOverall, this is a solid study. As a

believer in hell, it was refreshing to find a study that doesn't try to dismiss the belief. Professor Gin Lum largely lets the historical evidence speak for itself. One portion of the book that is especially compelling is the section dealing with the psychological impact of belief in hell. She notes that in being warned of hell, people were not to act on their despair but to throw themselves on God's mercy for salvation, [but] some were unable to safely navigate the movement from anxiety to assurance and suffered mental breakdowns and successful or attempted suicides. Today, although it rarely seems to manifest itself in mental illness, the difficulty in navigating a course to the assurance of salvation remains an ongoing problem within Christianity. Belief in hell remains a formal belief in evangelical churches, but it is largely an unspoken belief, likely because of the anxiety associated with it. This is sad. Hell must be honestly faced. After facing it though, as Peter Kreeft has noted, we must look to what Christ taught about hell and our salvation from it for assurance, not to our own doubts and anxieties.² of 2 people found the following review helpful. Over-reliance on quotes from old church bulletins (with the best of scholarly intentions) makes it a slog in places. By Kevin Brannon Interesting perspective on one of the belief systems that has always seemed weird and oddly very American to me. Over-reliance on quotes from old church bulletins (with the best of scholarly intentions) makes it a slog in places. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Four Stars By David E. Longacre Just finished reading this thoughtful and well documented book. I found the information clearly explained in understandable language.

Among the pressing concerns of Americans in the first century of nationhood were day-to-day survival, political harmony, exploration of the continent, foreign policy, and--fixed deeply in the collective consciousness--hell and eternal damnation. The fear of fire and brimstone and the worm that never dies exerted a profound and lasting influence on Americans' ideas about themselves, their neighbors, and the rest of the world. Kathryn Gin Lum poses a number of vital questions: Why did the fear of hell survive Enlightenment critiques in America, after largely subsiding in Europe and elsewhere? What were the consequences for early and antebellum Americans of living with the fear of seeing themselves and many people they knew eternally damned? How did they live under the weighty obligation to save as many souls as possible? What about those who rejected this sense of obligation and fear? Gin Lum shows that beneath early Americans' vaunted millennial optimism lurked a pervasive anxiety: that rather than being favored by God, they and their nation might be the object of divine wrath. As time-honored social hierarchies crumbled before revival fire, economic unease, and political chaos, "saved" and "damned" became as crucial distinctions as race, class, and gender. The threat of damnation became an impetus for or deterrent from all kinds of behaviors, from reading novels to owning slaves. Gin Lum tracks the idea of hell from the Revolution to Reconstruction. She considers the ideas of theological leaders like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney, as well as those of ordinary women and men. She discusses the views of Native Americans, Americans of European and African descent, residents of Northern insane asylums and Southern plantations, New England's clergy and missionaries overseas, and even proponents of Swedenborgianism and annihilationism. *Damned Nation* offers a captivating account of an idea that played a transformative role in America's intellectual and cultural history.

"Revealing and engaging."--*Christianity Today* "This thought-provoking work that illuminates America's distinct moral and religious self-understanding is ideal for anyone concerned with the convergence of morality and culture."--*Library Journal* "An elucidating study of why hell continued to matter in early America."--*Kirkus* s