

ISRAELITES ALL

B. Z. Sobel

Jew and Mormon: Historic Group Relation and Religious Outlook. By Rudolph Glanz. New York: The Author, 1963. vii + 379 pp. \$6.00.

B. Z. Sobel is Associate Professor of Sociology at Brandeis University.

For those interested in expanding our understanding of the phenomena of Mormonism and of Judaism, the appearance of Glanz's *Jew and Mormon* should have constituted an event of some significance. Students of the history of religions, historians, sociologists, and for that matter knowledgeable laymen have, since the very first appearance of Mormonism, recognized and commented upon the obvious parallels existing between the two faith-communities: the sense of peoplehood, persecutions, charges of legalism, religious polity, etc. Glanz quotes from Ludlow's *The Heart of the Continent* to indicate this startling congruity:

"It is curious to see how the very physical circumstances of Mormonism are a copy of the Jewish. The parallel is not a fanciful or accidental one. The Mormons acknowledge, in some points intend it, themselves. Kirtland and Nauvoo were their settlements in Egypt; Joe Smith was their Moses; and when he died too early for a sight of the promised land, Brigham Young became the Joshua who led them all the way home. They have founded their Jerusalem in a Holy Land wonderfully like the original. Like Gennesareth, Lake Utah is a body of fresh water emptying by a river Jordan into a Dead sea without outlet and intensely saline. The Saints find their Edomites and Philistines in the Indians . . . and in the troops of Uncle Sam. The climate is a photographic copy of the Judean; the thirsty fields must be irrigated through long seasons of rainless, cloudless heat, while the ridges of Lebanon, here called the Wahsatch, are covered with snow."

The historical parallels are of course plain enough, but the sociological implications of these are even more interesting and seminal, making Mr. Glanz's failure (and failure it is) all the more disheartening. I don't remember a book that I found more difficult to read, or to learn from, than this one. It is dry, where the raw materials have intrinsic flair, pedantic throughout, badly edited, over long and over drawn (a whole chapter is devoted to two [maybe one] Jewish convert[s] to Mormonism in the 19th century), and in general it adds little or nothing to anything that anybody might want to know something about. I came to the book expecting much and came away totally frustrated and just a little angry. In fairness to Mr. Glanz it must be noted that the work was intended to be an exercise in historical research, bringing together diverse materials of all sorts bearing on the relationships and contacts between Jews and Mormons. In large measure he has succeeded in doing this, but "bringing together" should apply to structure, analysis and the elaboration of *meaning* rather than mere *collecting*, and herein lies the book's failure.

In discussing the Mormon mission to the Jews, for example, it is not adequate to make passing references to the legitimating nature of this mission

and then devote the remainder of a lengthy chapter to recounting the instances and places where missionary contact occurred. One wants to know something about the special internal purposes and effects of this mission upon the unfolding Mormon praxis. Similarly, in taking note of Mormon particularism, economic innovation, church governance, minority status, it would have been useful to go beyond the notation of points at which Mormon and Jewish practices intersected to discuss ways in which they differed because of historical, ecological, and theological divergencies. In short, we are dealing with a fascinating datum of religious and social innovation, where questions about the nature of two distinct and yet curiously related phenomena could be raised which could make understanding of both more feasible, but where the author aborts in a miasma of trivia and simple cataloguing. I, for one, am amazed at how Mormons and Jews manifest similar loyalty to their faith-community even in the absence of theological commitment. What is it in the nature of the two structures that elicits this loyalty? One cannot help but be struck by the sense of group cohesion and mutual dependence that both manage to inspire in their adherents. Is there a common, isolatable element or group of elements that might account for this? I find the historicity that pervades both Mormonism and Judaism a source of wonder. Can this be understood to form a basic strut of support for both groups and a partial explanation for their strength? Similarly intriguing is the shared emphasis on the establishment, or at least the advancement, of the future celestial Zion here and now, the centrality of the Old Testament, the sanctification of family life, the dedication to pragmatism, the acceptance, indeed embracing, of science into the total framework of both groups. One wants to know how these elements emerged among the new "Peculiar People" and how (if at all) they are related to the dynamic that underlies normative Judaism — matters to which Mr. Glanz does not address himself at all.

Without demanding that Mr. Glanz write a book that he did not intend to write, I nevertheless feel that the raising of questions similar to the above are important in making sense of the raw historical data.

For all that I believe the book seriously deficient in most respects, I think some positive latent function has been served through its publication. It does, in fact, represent the first attempt to go beyond the occasional notation of Jewish-Mormon similarities on a sporadic and informal plane, suggesting that the exploration of this relationship in a systematic and scholarly fashion might prove beneficial and of interest. Without attempting to stretch parallels to an absurd degree, I wonder if something about the nature of minority group internal defenses and the problem of individual sub-group identity might be learned from intensive and close study of these two factors within the two cultures. Differences between the groups might prove similarly heuristic, for example, the Mormon "predilection" toward political conservatism and the Jewish community's seemingly unshakable commitment to political liberalism. Here we have two minority communities attempting to structure some kind of defensive stand *vis a vis* the embracing, larger culture, who have arrived at quite different behavioral and ideological positions. The various mechanisms — historical, ideological, theological — which have played a role in this drama are, I feel, worthy of further and deeper explication. Glanz's volume does not qualify as a major effort in this direction and it will remain a task for future scholars and researchers. The material is