

peating that kind of demagoguery. She goes on to suggest except for the passage of time, other “established” religions would be classed as cults, Mormonism among them. Her second mention of Mormonism is in her chapter on taxes. She further observes on taxes that churches have the most favored tax advantage of any other type of group in America. Which takes us to the success of contemporary fundamentalist groups.

Weiss discusses our contemporary world as possibly being in a time of religious revival similar to the Great Awakening led by Jonathan Edwards or the Second Awakening led by Charles G. Finney in midnineteenth-century America. Her description of modern fundamentalist groups includes their Old Testament—oriented intolerance, anti-communist paranoia, and dogmatic support for military solutions to world problems. In fairness, Mormonism is saved in part from this category by the LDS First Presidency’s MX statement which warns . . .

against the terrifying arms race in which the nations of the earth are presently engaged. We deplore in particular the building of vast arsenals of nuclear weaponry. We are advised that there is already enough such weaponry to destroy in large measure our civilization, with consequent suffering and misery of incalculable extent.

(*Ensign*, June 1981), p. 76

The Moral Majority, Christian Voice, Oral Roberts, and Billy Graham are all

mentioned in Weiss’s spectrum of fundamentalist evangelical groups and preachers competing for minds and money in our midst. Political action is the most frightening aspect of these groups’ work because the money generated by their Madison-Avenue approach to proselyting gives them leverage to multiply income and power beyond the scope their numbers deserve. Their political influence was demonstrated in 1980 when targeted “liberals” were turned out of office to be replaced by followers of one fundamentalist group or another. Moral Majority leader Jerry Falwell converted his church meetings into political action committees where people in attendance received instructions on how to vote and influence congressional representatives. Critics advocate thinking of this family of advocates, not as religions but as interest groups like the National Association of Manufacturers, American Medical Association or American Bar Association who lobby for their own advantage, sometimes without thinking about the general good.

The author’s presentation of these facts and positions is an attempt to inform rather than inflame. She is quite aware that regulation of any religion in any way is what the Founding Fathers wanted to avoid and that subsequent events have proven their wisdom. The book is a vindication of the framer’s faith in democratic principles to leave the governing of religion to the people rather than their representatives.

The Klan in Utah

Blazing Crosses in Zion: The Ku Klux Klan in Utah by Larry R. Gerlach (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 1982), 248 pp., \$17.50.

Reviewed by John R. Sillito, archivist and assistant professor of libraries at Weber State College. He is particularly interested in the history of the left in twentieth-century Utah.

For most of us, mention of the Ku Klux Klan conjures up visions of the Deep South—night riders in white robes, burning crosses, and, as the lyrics of “Strange Fruit,” Billie Holiday’s jazz classic, state, “Black body swaying in the Southern breeze/Strange fruit hanging from the poplar trees.” In reality, the Klan was a nationwide movement which combined fra-

ternalism, patriotism, Protestantism, and political activism. The Klan has been active in America at various periods and exists today. It was most active in the 1920s when its national membership exceeded two million, making it the "largest nativist-vigilante movement in American history."

As Larry R. Gerlach demonstrates in *Blazing Crosses in Zion*, the "Invisible Empire," particularly during these years, was "not alien to the historical experience of the Intermountain West in general [or] the Beehive state in particular." With the exception of Colorado, Gerlach asserts, the Klan was not "as influential in the Intermountain West as elsewhere," but it was "a force nonetheless."

Because the Klan was "a local institution organized in response to conditions peculiar to a generalized locale," studies of the Klan at the state and regional level are important. Such studies help us better understand the overall components of a social-political movement that was at once both national and local in character.

In Utah the Klan was organized in 1921 and grew slowly until "it enjoyed a tremendous spurt of growth statewide in 1924-1925 because of intensive organizational activities" (p. xvii). This was its peak in terms of visibility, influence, and acceptance. In 1926, internal dissent, incompetent leadership, media opposition, hostile public opinion, governmental attacks including the passage of "anti-mask" ordinances, and "the single most important factor" — the opposition of the Mormon Church — combined to bring about its decline.

Though the Klan in Utah was, in Gerlach's words, a "dismal failure" following an intense flurry of activity, it was not without impact. Many Utahns, particularly immigrants, believed that the secret order was a tangible threat to them. And, as Gerlach demonstrates, not without cause.

Gerlach's study sheds light on the chronological development of the Klan. Moreover, Gerlach explores the conditions

prevalent in the post World War I period that led a handful of Utahns to join the secret order; provides information on the kinds of people who made up Utah Klancraft during its flourishing and, perhaps most significantly, examines the impact that opposition from the LDS Church had on the chances of success for the Klan in Zion.

Gerlach observes that Utah Klansmen, with some exceptions, were not simply hell-raisers, but rather were "largely decent, generous and principled" individuals who believed that their actions, and their affiliations, were "anything but un-American." As Gerlach states, one cannot, no matter how reprehensible Klan ideology and practice might be, "dismiss the Klan as a band of simple minded fanatics," for there is "too much of the bigot and racist in each of us for such facile self-righteousness" (p. xxi).

Klan membership in Utah resembled patterns elsewhere. It was male, white, native-born, and Protestant. Like their counterparts throughout the country, Utah Klansmen were middle-aged and middle-class, not marginal.

Why then did these respectable men don hood and robe? "First and foremost" among reasons was nativism, xenophobia, and bigotry. Additionally, adherents of the Klan believed they stood for law and order, honest government, the chastity of women, traditional American morality, and social stability. They were knights in the battle against social disorder and rampant vice.

The Klan seized the fears of a generation of Americans living through a period of disillusionment, wrapped those fears in the flag, and offered tangible solutions to those who were "confused and afraid" of the trends they saw in American society. In particular, the Klan exploited the fears of some Americans who saw immigrants and blacks as advocating alien ideologies.

These fears also existed in Utah, yet the KKK failed in Utah, as it did elsewhere, because most people, even sympathizers, recognized that the Klan advocated

racism and violence in the name of loyal Americanism. At the same time, the Klan failed in Utah for a reason not prevalent anywhere else—the active, open, and clear opposition of the Mormon Church.

Mormon opposition to Klancraft, according to Gerlach, was motivated by “secular and sectarian” factors; but it was unmistakable and genuine. He notes:

In addition to anti-Klan editorials in the *Deseret News*, LDS leaders expressed their opposition to the Klan indirectly through law-and-order exhortations at church conferences and through notices of Klan activity in Utah and elsewhere in . . . the *Improvement Era*. For many Mormons the final word on the subject came during the church’s semi-annual conference in October 1922. Following President Heber J. Grant’s firm admonition to “sustain and live the law,” Presiding Bishop Charles W. Nibley specifically named the Ku Klux Klan in condemning secret societies formed in times of contention. (p. 36)

Nibley argued that organizations like the Klan had “undertaken to administer what they call justice independent of Constitutional law, and the rights of men.” Furthermore, Nibley asserted that the Klan had taken actions against “certain people” which have resulted in “disorder, turmoil, strife” as well as the breakdown of law. For Mormons, comments Gerlach, the message was clear: “avoid secret societies such as the Klan and render strict obedience to duly constituted laws” (p. 37).

The leaders of Utah Klancraft were placed in an ambivalent position toward Mormons. On one hand, Mormons were ideal potential members because they were “overwhelmingly Anglo-Saxon, intensely patriotic, culturally puritanical and oriented toward social regulation.” Yet Klan leaders were also aware that in a strict sense Mormons were not technically Protestants and thus ineligible for membership. This ambivalence inhibited growth because it tended to reduce significantly the pool of possible numbers, particularly among the state’s dominant faith.

Other western Klansmen were openly hostile to the LDS Church. At the 1923 “Imperial Klonvocation,” for example, the Grand Dragon of Wyoming told his fellow Klansmen that in both Utah and the West, the LDS Church was an enemy “more subtle and far more cunning” than the Roman Catholic Church: Mormons were clannish, voted en bloc, opposed law which conflicted with their “peculiar” religious beliefs, were theocratic, and devoted ultimately to their prophet.

Klan insistence on the absolute separation of church and state further alarmed Mormons who were accustomed to hearing these code words used time and time again to oppose the Church. More importantly, Gerlach recognizes that “in a very real sense, Mormonism rendered the Ku Klux Klan superfluous in Utah” because the Church discharged effectively the “moral function” espoused by the Invisible Empire (p. 37).

The fact that the Mormon Church emerges from Gerlach’s study not only as an opponent of the Klan, but as the major force in thwarting its growth in Utah is both important and ironic. It is important because it helps us understand that in early twentieth-century Utah no social, political, or economic movement had a chance to succeed without either the support or, at least, tacit neutrality of the LDS Church. It is ironic because Gerlach’s attempts to fully explore Mormon opposition to Utah Klancraft were limited by his inability to gain access to key documents in the Church archives when he did his research in 1980. He notes that the Heber J. Grant papers were closed to him because they were being catalogued, and that “officials of the Historical Department” denied his requests to “examine two files in the correspondence of the First Presidency labelled “Secret Societies 1921–26’.” Gerlach may be too gentle concerning the policies of the Historical Department. I doubt whether any scholar at this point could gain access to the Grant papers, irrespective of their cataloging status. Moreover, access to the First

Presidency files Gerlach requested is, realistically speaking, unlikely since usage requires the permission of the First Presidency.

Not only does Gerlach's study suffer because he was denied access to these important documents, but as long as key materials are denied to scholars, efforts to chronicle Utah history and the history of the LDS church will be seriously hindered. A final irony is that if these documents were unavailable for fear they might be used to discredit the church, Gerlach's study, and the efforts of most scholars, suggest the opposite result.

More on Kirtland

A Profile of Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio, and Members of Zion's Camp 1830-1839: Vital Statistics and Sources, compiled by Milton V. Backman, Jr., 2nd ed. rev. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1983), 165 pp.

A History of Kirtland, Ohio, by Anne B. Prusha (Mentor, Ohio: Lakeland Community College Press, 1982), 130 pp.

Reviewed by Larry T. Wimmer, professor and chairman, Department of Economics, Brigham Young University, Provo, Utah.

FOR MANY, KIRTLAND IS VIEWED as the genesis of Mormonism as a viable church and perhaps the best test case of Joseph Smith's prophetic claims and personal integrity. As such, interest in the history of Mormon Kirtland is not likely to wane soon. Two recent additions are diverse, not only in relationship to each other, but also in comparison to previous work on Kirtland.

Milton Backman's *A Profile of Latter-day Saints of Kirtland, Ohio, . . .* is an important contribution to our knowledge of Kirtland and will be a primary source of data for the serious scholar for years to come. His work reflects the increased interest in quantitative data and particularly genealogical records as primary-data

Blazing Crosses in Zion examines a previously unexamined aspect of social history providing insight into the culture and politics of Utah during a crucial time. Moreover, it places that history within the larger context of the Klan in the Intermountain West and across the nation. While the book is sometimes repetitive and has a few minor errors of fact, Larry Gerlach asks new questions and addresses new areas of research. His work will undoubtedly give others incentive to undertake similar studies of other aspects of the contemporary Utah experience.

sources. His study is not, however, devoted to settling issues, but is primarily a careful enumeration of names and vital statistics of Mormon families most likely living in Kirtland sometime during the decade of the 1830s (80 of the 165 pages), lists of participants in Zion's Camp and Kirtland Camp (13 pages), shareholders of the Kirtland Safety Society (2 pages), and a very useful listing of the Kirtland land and tax records by Keith Perkins (33 pages).

Anyone seeking an accurate estimate of population for Kirtland or the Church during this period is aware of the many difficulties. No complete Church membership records exist and, as Backman notes, there are many visitors and temporary residents in addition to the usual problems of duplicate names, misspellings, etc. The result of Backman's study is clearly the most complete and accurate list available. Backman acknowledges that these lists and vital statistics are not complete or without error. They sometimes raise additional questions themselves. An example is the increase in the number of Saints in Kirtland and vicinity from 100 to 500 within two years of the departure of some 2,000 members for Missouri.

Anyone seriously interested in events surrounding Mormon Kirtland will of necessity consult this source and be in-