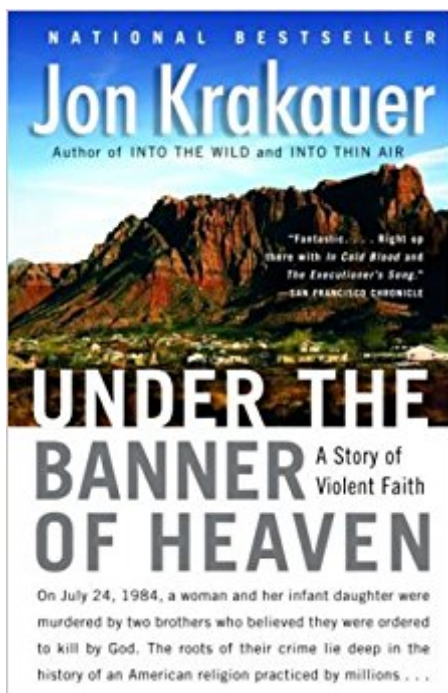


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Under The Banner Of Heaven: A Story Of Violent Faith



Synopsis

This extraordinary work of investigative journalism takes readers inside America's isolated Mormon Fundamentalist communities, where some 40,000 people still practice polygamy. Defying both civil authorities and the Mormon establishment in Salt Lake City, the renegade leaders of these Taliban-like theocracies are zealots who answer only to God. At the core of Krakauer's book are brothers Ron and Dan Lafferty, who insist they received a commandment from God to kill a blameless woman and her baby girl. Beginning with a meticulously researched account of this appalling double murder, Krakauer constructs a multi-layered, bone-chilling narrative of messianic delusion, polygamy, savage violence, and unyielding faith. Along the way he uncovers a shadowy offshoot of America's fastest growing religion, and raises provocative questions about the nature of religious belief.

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Customer Reviews

In 1984, Ron and Dan Lafferty murdered the wife and infant daughter of their younger brother Allen. The crimes were noteworthy not merely for their brutality but for the brothers' claim that they were acting on direct orders from God. In *Under the Banner of Heaven*, Jon Krakauer tells the story of the killers and their crime but also explores the shadowy world of Mormon fundamentalism from which the two emerged. The Mormon Church was founded, in part, on the idea that true believers could speak directly with God. But while the mainstream church attempted to be more palatable to the general public by rejecting the controversial tenet of polygamy, fundamentalist splinter groups saw this as apostasy and took to the hills to live what they believed to be a righteous life. When their

beliefs are challenged or their patriarchal, cult-like order defied, these still-active groups, according to Krakauer, are capable of fighting back with tremendous violence. While Krakauer's research into the history of the church is admirably extensive, the real power of the book comes from present-day information, notably jailhouse interviews with Dan Lafferty. Far from being the brooding maniac one might expect, Lafferty is chillingly coherent, still insisting that his motive was merely to obey God's command. Krakauer's accounts of the actual murders are graphic and disturbing, but such detail makes the brothers' claim of divine instruction all the more horrifying. In an age where Westerners have trouble comprehending what drives Islamic fundamentalists to kill, Jon Krakauer advises us to look within America's own borders. --John Moe --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Veteran reporter Krakauer's insider look at the Mormon church translates well to audio thanks to his clean, by-the-book delivery. In 1984, brothers Ron and Dan Lafferty killed the wife and infant daughter of their brother Allen. Ron and Dan are fundamentalist Mormons, and their views-particularly their belief in the divine importance of polygamy-conflicted with those of their outspoken sister-in-law; accordingly, Dan received a revelation from God that he was to "remove" them for the greater good of His Kingdom. Dan, who was interviewed from prison, has no remorse for what he has done; after all, he maintains, why should he apologize for doing God's will? This segment is particularly chilling, as is Krakauer's unemotional delivery. Krakauer wisely eschews character voices and instead narrates the details of the crime and the history of the Mormon church in a no-nonsense fashion. The fascinating historical segments, though lengthy at times, serve a dual purpose: they explore the cultures that can give rise to religious fundamentalism and serve as a welcome reprieve in this highly emotional story. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Audible Audio Edition edition.

Very compelling, even though I am really not very interested in Mormon history. Jon Krakauer researches carefully and writes in a clear and concise manner. He personally interviewed some of the individuals, bringing them to life in the book, and his Author's Remarks and Appendix at the end of the book give an in - depth insight into his reason for writing about this subject.

I didn't know much about Mormonism, but this was eye-opening (actually more like eye-popping). There's a lot more plural marriage going on than most of us have ever known about, not only here in

the US but in Canada and Mexico (where some polygamists went when the US outlawed plural marriage). And for some reason "we" don't seem to care enough about young girls to rescue them from their usually-much-older husbands even though polygamy is illegal as is pedophilia. The book is extremely well-researched and well-written.

I love Jon's writing. He is a brilliant investigative journalist. This I must confess was my least favorite of his books that I've read. It was well written and comprehensive but a bit too long for me, so I struggled from mid-way through to finish the book (although I did). But it is fascinating and through provoking.

This was a very informative and interesting book about the Latter Day Saints and the Fundamentalists. Krakauer is an excellent writer and you can't beat his descriptive and intelligent story writing. I have never been crazy about going from one story to another and back again, but he is probably about the only author that skips around like that and I don't mind (that much). I like how he picks the Lafferty brothers to hook you right from the start. It really is astonishing how people can follow and believe anything as long as it's under the guise of being a prophet. I guess if you are raised that way, I don't know it just amazes me some of the things that go on in these societies. It's hard to keep the different branches of these cult-like religious fanatics straight, they are all off shoots from Joseph Smith, but each one has a different interpretation of how the church should be run. It will amaze you and scare you to know that these people are living right under your nose. He also gives a background history about the Mormon faith that is very interesting and not so flattering. It is so packed with information that you could easily read it twice and be amazed again. With his extensive bibliography he sticks to the facts so he's not making this stuff up folks and that's what is so uncomfortable.

Not positive, uplifting subject-matter which makes it a challenging read. But the writer's language, and thoroughness are impressive, at times bordering on epic. Gives the reader a great understanding of critical LDS church history. Also gives you insight into the fringe fundamentalist side. And you better be interested in the latter, because it is the focus. Mormonism is growing very quickly, it is important to have a basic understanding of it as an American citizen.

As a non-Mormon resident of Utah, I still see this mentality of male "spiritual" and sexual domination prominent in this religion, even outside of the FDLS. A very enlightening book. But I'm still confused

as to why so many buy into this, from 150 years ago until today. My apologies in advance.

This was an eye opener into a world I could not imagine existed, here in America. I felt frustrated, angry, sad and a multitude of other emotions. I wonder how what is described can be done in the name of God and Jesus. I'm not religious and a lot of that has to do with the kinds of things described in this book. How can a God turn a blind eye to these things. To allow children to be fed to the twisted nature of man. There is no utopia. No perfection that can't be bastardized. This is but one example of that. A poignant though emotional rollercoaster. Would recommend if only to raise awareness of this terrible thing.

I am sure Jon will be attacked by the "believers," both orthodox and fundamental, but I think he gives a balanced view of a very strange and frightening, particularly for women and children, CULT. I was unaware as I'm sure are many of the complete historical odyssey of the original group under Joseph Smith and how his theology evolved. What a con it all was and continues to be!! And its as if the adherents just wallow in all the contradictions in it, as if it is only understandable to the elite hierarchy. I love how anyone can receive a revelation that can change a former commandment to allow for something that was once sinful to become orthodoxy. I'm surprised Hitler was not an adherent. I lived with a woman who attended Brigham Young under a scholarship and lived happily among them because of their social network which allowed her to raise her children while attending school. However, I now find it ironic that this woman, herself a victim of child abuse, could not see through the tyranny of the system and its dangers. Happily, she is no longer within their clutches. I've always said that the long, hard winters of upstate New York was the breeding ground of several strange religions. It probably still continues to have that effect on people so this book should be in the Core Curriculum of that state.

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