

AMONG THE MORMONS

A Survey of Current Literature

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IT WAS INDEED a historic moment when on Friday 9 June 1978, President Spencer W. Kimball announced, in a five-paragraph letter to all the leaders of the Church, that God "has heard our prayers, and by revelation has confirmed that the long-promised day has come when every faithful, worthy man in the Church may receive the holy priesthood, with the power to exercise its divine authority, and enjoy with his loved ones every blessing that flows therefrom, including the blessings of the temple." This monumental pronouncement was hailed by much of the nation's media as the most important shift in Mormon policy since President Wilfred Woodruff's 1890 Manifesto barring polygamy.

Everything else written about the Mormons in America's newspapers in 1978 suffered by comparison. Even a cursory view of Linda Thatcher's extensive bibliography which follows illuminates the fact that more than sixty percent of what was written in newspapers about Mormons during 1978 was published in the western states nearest Utah. While it is interesting, and perhaps meaningful, to gather statistics on the number of inches of newspaper space devoted to issues relating to the Church (some 323, 375 inches in 1978, according to the Church's own tabulations), it is also important to keep in mind how many people actually see what is being written.

Only the Church's opposition to the proposed Equal Rights Amendment stimulated articles throughout the year in such prestigious publications as the *Buffalo News*, *Chicago Tribune*, *Denver Post*, *Honolulu Star Bulletin*, *Los Angeles Times*, *Milwaukee Journal*, *New York Times* and *Washington Post*. Although there were several major articles on other topics in newspapers with circulations of more than 100,000, the majority appeared in publications with limited circulations. The most prominent Mormon topics in 1978, apart from President Kimball's announcement and the ERA, were education, local poli-

tics, polygamy and Utah's heritage. Significant issues receiving local coverage in Utah were the American Civil Liberties Union-Mormon Seminary Suit in Logan, and the federal government's fair housing suit against BYU.

Mormon scholars and students have an obligation to write for the general public as well as for those who read the highly selective works cited in "Among the Mormons." Today's newspaper editors are obviously interested in material on Mormons; they would undoubtedly welcome new insights into Mormonism. Our obligation is to provide them.

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