

THE MORMON ROLE IN ACHIEVING EQUALITY FOR UTAH

POLITICAL DELIVERANCE:
THE MORMON QUEST FOR STATEHOOD

By Edward Leo Lyman
University of Illinois Press, 1986, \$22.95, 361 pp.

Reviewed by Thomas G. Alexander

FOR FORTY-SEVEN years, Utah citizens hoped to achieve statehood, placing themselves on the same footing as other citizens who had already won that status. Seven times during the period from 1849 to 1896, Utahns drafted constitutions and applied for admission. On six occasions, Congress rebuffed them, largely because of the controversy surrounding Mormonism's national image and the various practices of the Latter-day Saints. Not until the sixth convention in 1887 did the delegates reluctantly accede to the national wish to prohibit polygamy—perhaps the most universally detested of the Saints' practices. Clearly, however, Congress questioned their sincerity and refused to admit them.

Between 1887 and July 1894 conditions changed to such a degree that Congress passed an enabling act which the president signed, and Utah statehood was assured. This book, based on Lyman's 1981 doctoral dissertation and adumbrated to some extent by his previously published articles on the Moses Thatcher case and Isaac Trumbo, narrates and interprets the role of the LDS church's leadership in the events which led to the passage of the enabling act and the declaration of statehood.

Lyman's thesis is quite straightforward. He believes that by the late 1880s the Church leadership had become convinced of two things. First, they thought that they could no longer count on the Democratic Party, which had previously seemed more supportive of

their point of view than the Republicans. They reached this conclusion because of the unwillingness of key Democratic leaders to risk potential censure to support the Saints' cause on several particularly important votes. Second, they became convinced that they would have to win the support of the Republican Party's establishment, which had been most hostile to the Mormons since its first presidential campaign of 1856, when the GOP denounced Mormon polygamy as one of the "twin relics of barbarism."

In this connection, it should be understood that Lyman has provided us with only part of the story. He is convinced, probably rightly, that it is the most important part. The part Lyman downplays, however, is the role of Utah's delegate, Joseph L. Rawlins, and other Democratic stalwarts who worked with the party leadership in support of statehood. It was, after all, Democrat Grover Cleveland and the Democratically controlled 53rd Congress that finally assured statehood for Utah.

Lyman's story is the winning of the Republicans to the Mormons' side. While, as Lyman's narrative indicates, the story is quite complex, it can be summarized briefly. Essentially, by working with a number of California Republicans with Utah connections like Isaac Trumbo and Morris M. Estee; by cultivating the good offices of some Midwesterners like James S. Clarkson, chairman of the Republican National Committee; and by winning the support of some national Republican leaders like James G. Blaine, they succeeded in swinging the GOP

behind their quest for statehood.

In composing his narrative, Lyman reiterates and ties into the larger, pattern first interpreted in pioneering studies ranging from B.H. Roberts *Comprehensive History of the Church* (1910) and Leonard J. Arrington's *Great Basin Kingdom* (1958) to Gustave O. Larson's *The "Americanization" of Utah for Statehood* (1971). Since those earlier studies, we have recognized that the Church gave up at least the insistence on the necessity of plural marriage as a central doctrine, that the Mormons abandoned their political exclusiveness and divided into the national parties, and that the LDS Church in general and Mormon entrepreneurs in particular began to work together with Gentiles in various business ventures.

Lyman's principal contribution is in his interpretation of the extent and details of the ways in which these previously known patterns of development in the Mormon kingdom fit in with the larger regional and national patterns, and in chronicling the exchange of favors promised and to some extent delivered in the bargain.

My own feeling is that Lyman's work is both imaginative and insightful. This study will undoubtedly remain for many years as the standard volume on the role of the LDS church's leadership in the achievement of Utah statehood.

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