



Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons

Jan Shipps

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Over the course of four decades, Jan Shipps has become the preeminent non-Mormon interpreter of Mormonism. This important work assembles Shipps's writing about this tradition over the past thirty years, much of it published here for the first time. It also does something more. "Sojourner in the Promised Land" presents an unusual parallel history in which Shipps surrounds her professional writings about the Latter-day Saints with an ongoing personal description of her encounters with them. By combining a portrait of the dynamic evolution of contemporary Mormonism with absorbing intellectual autobiography, Shipps illuminates the Mormons and at the same time reveals her experience of being an intimate outsider in a culture that remains for her both familiar and strange. Among an array of other topics, Shipps discusses the methods she developed for researching and writing about the Mormon religion and its history. She reflects on how her circumstances made her - even as she maintained her Methodist standing - a virtual extension of the LDS public communications division. She also assesses media images of the Mormons and addresses the question of whether Mormonism is Christian. Most important, this volume reveals how, by being in the right place at the right time, Shipps was able to observe firsthand Mormonism's conversion from an provincial to a universal belief system. Her insights into this dramatic transformation reveal the implications, highly pertinent to contexts far removed from Mormonism, of dislodging a faith system from the specific cultural context of its origins and translating it into an adaptive system capable of adjusting to the conditions of many cultures. Infused with Shipps's lively curiosity, her scholarly rigor, and her contagious fascination with a significant subculture, "Sojourner in the Promised Land" stands as a major addition to Mormon scholarship.

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