

# MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Michael E. Nielsen, Editor

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## President's Message

The annual meeting of the Mormon Social Science Association is only a few days away and I hope that many of you will be able to join the gathering in San Diego. The MSSA sponsored sessions have all been blocked together and will meet in The Wicker Room of the Holiday Inn On the Bay on Saturday, November 8th. Our first session will start at 7:00 a.m. (our annual business/breakfast meeting) and sessions will run through 2:30 p.m. Many of us may choose to lunch together during the 11:00 a.m to 1:00 p.m. break.

I want to offer my thanks to all who have helped support the efforts of the MSSA during the two years I have served as President. This includes all those who have paid dues, submitted materials for the Newsletter, served on the Board, and/or participated in the annual meetings by organizing sessions, giving papers, or attending sessions. Of special note are the contributions of Secretary-Treasurer Lynn Payne and Newsletter Editor Michael Nielsen, both of whom have gone beyond the call of duty in helping maintain the infrastructure of the MSSA. Following our meeting in San Diego, Gary Shepherd will take my place as President. With Gary at the helm, I'm confident that the future of the MSSA will be bright.

## Conference Preview

Come to San Diego November 7-9 for the latest in MSSA research. The conference will be held in conjunction with the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association meetings at Holiday Inn on the Bay. Enjoy San Diego's weather, if you can pull yourself away from the stimulating conference sessions going on indoors!

There are several sessions and papers that feature Mormon social science. Mormon themes are addressed in three sessions sponsored by MSSA in addition to the Saturday morning business meeting and breakfast. Here are the details of the sessions.

*Mormonism and Homosexuality*, organized by David Knowlton

Homosexuality at BYU, by Samuel Clayton;  
Mormonism, Homosexuality, and the  
Construction of Sexuality: A Case Study, by O.  
Kendall White;

LDS Conceptualization of Marriage and the  
Politics of Same Sex Marriage, by Richley Crapo;  
Creative Community Building: Lesbians, Gay and  
Bisexual Mormons at the Frontiers, by Bonnie  
Lynn Mitchell-G.

*Reflecting on the Work of Harold Christensen:  
Trailblazer in the Social Scientific Study of  
Mormonism*, organized by Armand Mauss and  
convened by Larry Young. Panelists for this  
session include James Davidson, Anna Davidson,  
Tim Heaton, and Armand Mauss. Harold  
Christensen will be the discussant.

*Borders and Boundaries in International Mormonism*, organized by Grant Underwood.  
Borders and Boundaries in Pacific Islands Mormonism: What the 1997 Pioneer Sesquicentennial Celebration Revealed, by Grant Underwood;  
Culture and Compromise: The Negotiation of Cultural Identity at the Polynesian Cultural Center in Hawaii, by Vernice Wineera;  
The Presence of Pictures of Jesus Christ in Latter-day Saint Homes: A Cross-cultural Study, by Ronald Jackson;  
Christianizing Quetzalcoatl, Mexicanizing Mormonism, by Thomas Murphy.

In addition to these MSSA sessions, Mormon themes are to be found in several other papers throughout the conference.

Mormon and Neo-Pentecostal Spirituality and Business Ethics in Guatemala City, by Henri Gooren.  
The Mormon Church and Asian Americans: Meeting the Needs of New Immigrants, by Jessie Embry.  
Fuzzy Denominationalism, panel discussion includes Perry Cunningham and Keith Atkinson.  
Mormonism and Same-Sex Attraction: One Resolution to an Old Dilemma, by Sarah Clark, Steven Clark, Larry Jensen, and Janet Jensen.  
Attitudes about Marrying Males with Same Sex Attraction, by Larry Jensen, Jeffrey Rowe, Steve Davis, and Trevor Hickey.  
Religious Conflict and Consonance in (Mormon) Cyberspace, by Michael Nielsen.  
The "Secularization" of Utah and Mormon Church Growth, by Rick Phillips.

MSSA members are active throughout the conference as well. Their research on the broader religious scene includes several sessions that are sure to be packed houses.  
Michael J. Donahue (Authors meet Critics session of Money Matters: Personal Giving in American Churches).  
James Duke (Religious Affiliation and Support

for the Christian Coalition in the 104th Congress).  
Larry Jensen (Denominational Differences in Perceptions of Church Teachings that Apply to Private Lives).  
David Knowlton (Religious Processes in Contemporary Mexico).  
Armand Mauss (Discussant in session on Bridging Boundaries).  
Rodney Stark (Rational Choice Theory; Network Origins of Religious Movements; session devoted to his "The Rise of Christianity").

So, come to San Diego for a weekend of fascinating research, beautiful weather, and stimulating discussions. Those of you who are SSSR or RRA members should already have received a copy of the preliminary program. Lynn Payne (Research Info. Division, 18th Floor, 50 E. North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84150, 1-800-456-3860 ext. 3990) has a few extra copies if you need one. We'll see you there!

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **Dues**

If you have not yet paid dues for this year, you should have received a notice that your membership dues are past due. Please forward a check to Lynn Payne (Research Information Division, 18th Floor, 50 E. North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84150) to stay enrolled.

### **MSSA Brochure**

To help with our recruiting effort, Perry Cunningham and Lynn Payne are developing an informational brochure. It will include a description of the goals of the organization, the benefits of membership, and contact people for those who are interested in joining. If you have any ideas for the brochure, contact Perry or Lynn (both at: Research Info. Division, 18th Floor, 50 E. North Temple, Salt Lake City, UT 84150).

### **Newsletter Help**

Your MSSA colleagues can use your help! If you know of any announcements, news items,

information that may be of interest to MSSA, or corrections to the information that need to be made, please contact Michael Nielsen at Department of Psychology, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro GA 30460-8041. Or you may phone: (912) 681-5344, or e-mail: <MNielsen@gasou.edu > .

## **ELECTION RESULTS**

The last issue of the newsletter included a ballot for the bi-annual elections. Results are in, with Michael Nielsen to become President-Elect, and Lynn Payne to remain as Secretary-Treasurer. Council members will be Jessie Embry, Grant Underwood and Daryl White.

This is Larry Young's last year to serve as President. Be sure to thank him for his many years as newsletter editor and president. Gary Shepherd becomes president this year. You may contact him at Department of Sociology and Anthropology, Oakland University, Rochester MI 48063-4401. His e-mail address is <Shepherd@oakland.edu>.

## **UPCOMING CONFERENCES**

### **1998 Mormon History Association Conference**

Our good friend Armand Mauss is the current President of the MHA. In his "Message from the President" included in the latest MHA Newsletter, he gave the following description of the upcoming MHA Conference:

Message from the President.

We are looking forward with excitement to the next MHA conference on Memorial Day Weekend (May 21-24) 1998 in Washington, DC. It will take place at the Washington Marriott Hotel, 22nd (NW) and M Streets. (There are other Marriotts in DC; be sure to note the right one!) This hotel has given us reasonable rates for the area and several important amenities. The hotel's location, furthermore, is close to both DuPont Circle and Georgetown, two of the more colorful

areas of the city. More information about logistics and registration will be given in subsequent mailings.

This will be an ideal conference for families, where children can experience history first-hand, not only at various museums and other locations in the city but also at many sites within easy driving distance (including several Civil War battlefields). We hope also to offer special tours and workshops at the National Archives and the Library of Congress for scholars and others wishing to know more about those institutions as sources for the study of Mormon history. Beyond the national historical significance of this city, there is much also of interest in Mormon history, including the "old" Washington LDS chapel, now in the hands of the Unification Church (with whom we are negotiating for permission to hold one of our sessions there). We are fortunate indeed to have a strong Local Arrangements Committee working on such visits, tours, and sites (Roger Launius, Brent Smith, Mary Bradford, and others). Much Mormon history has involved happenings and relationships with Washington, DC., from Joseph Smith's visit with President Tyler, to Colonel Kane's interventions, to Brannan's negotiations, to the polygamy struggles, to the Smoot hearings, all the way down to the recent Supreme Court amicus briefs submitted by the LDS Church.

The theme of this year's conference is Mormon relationships with American government and society, and papers dealing with that theme will be especially welcome. Certainly papers on other themes will also be welcome, as will proposals for entire sessions. All such suggestions should be sent as soon as possible to the hard-working Co-Chairpersons of the Program Committee, Greg and JaLynn Prince, 14800 Pettit Way, Potomac, MD 20854 (301-330-9402). The official deadline for proposals was 1 Oct 1997. Later submissions might be possible under unique circumstances, at the pleasure of the Program Committee.

A special highlight of this conference will be the Tanner Lecture to be delivered by Rodney Stark, Professor of Sociology and Comparative Religion at the University of Washington. He has made a

social study of Mormons during his career and is periodically quoted over the pulpit at general conferences in Salt Lake City! He has had quite a bit to say in print about Mormon history, if only for comparative purposes. MHA members can be "primed" for this Tanner Lecture by reading in advance Stark's book (with Roger Finke), *The Churching of American and his most recent Rise of Christianity*. In both he offers innovative and controversial arguments about the determinants of growth and success in religious movements. He is also an energetic and entertaining speaker. SO, Y'ALL COME!

### **International Mormon Studies Conference 1999**

Professor Douglas J. Davies of the University of Durham, England, is organizing the International Mormon Studies Conference 1999 to be held at the University of Durham from April 19th-23rd, 1999. He has sent us the following information: Following the successful Mormon Studies Conference held at the University of Nottingham, England, in April 1995 and reflected in the book *Mormon Identities in Transition* (ed) Douglas J. Davies, (London: Cassell, 1996), a further Conference is to be held between April 19th-23rd, 1999 at the University of Durham, England. Papers are invited on the key issue of whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints bears the potential for being a new world-religion? Scholarly, research-based, and interdisciplinary papers might address such themes as: Creating time; founding prophets; missionary resources; the nature of sacred texts; the birth and growth of ritual; musical themes across the religion; literature, drama and art as cultural media; world-religion defined in the history of religions; sociological analyses of types of religious movements; conservative-liberal domains as intrinsic to world-religions; the nature of LDS cultural life in North America and elsewhere; self-conscious analysis of growth as a potential world-religion; phases, stages and transformations in world religions; cultural adaption beyond historic heartland; church expansion in particular

countries; doctrine and social organization; charisma, power and control; conquest and the gospel; answering death.

Run-up Programme to the Conference:

*March 1st, 1998* Deadline for offers of papers including outline of contents, bibliography and, where appropriate, a brief curriculum vitae of contributor.

*May 1st, 1998* Decision on accepted papers. Conference details publicised.

*June 1st, 1998* Conference application and registration opens.

Conference Convenor and Address for correspondence: As with the 1995 Conference the convenor is Professor Douglas J. Davies. Prof Davies holds a Chair within the Department of Theology, and is Principal of The College of St Hild and St Bede at the University of Durham. The Conference will be held at this College, adjacent to the River Wear, and looking over to the ancient Cathedral and City of Durham. Address Correspondence to:— Prof. Douglas J. Davies, The College of St Hild and St Bede, (LDS Conference), University of Durham, Durham DH1 1SZ, England.

### **NOTES FROM THE EAST**

Michael Nielsen, current Newsletter editor and newly elected President-Elect, recently traveled to Ukraine. He shares some thoughts about the state of religion and Mormonism in Ukraine.

*Religion in Ukraine*  
by Michael Nielsen

This summer I had the opportunity to attend a conference in Sevastopol Ukraine. The end of the cold war has brought with it many changes in the social landscape of Eastern Europe, and religion has been affected profoundly by these changes. The highlight of the conference was a paper presented by Anatoly M. Kolodny, Chief of the Department of Religious Studies of the Ukrainian

National Academy of Sciences. The following are some reflections based on the conference, drawn largely from his paper:

Kolodny, A. M. (1997, Sept.) The Problems of the State-Church Relations in Ukraine. Paper presented at the conference "Questions on Spirituality at the End of the Twentieth Century," Sevastopol, Ukraine.

After 350 years of subservience to Russia, Ukraine has entered a new era of political and religious independence. According to Kolodny, as few as 5% of people identified themselves as religious believers during communism. Now, however, this figure is nearly 70%.

One factor in this increase is the sense of nationalism in the new republic. Many of the people represented in the numbers Kolodny cites attend Ukrainian Orthodox services, at least in part because it is seen as the most Ukrainian of the religions.

A second factor is the proselytizing efforts of western Christian churches, which began to make inroads after the country's political changes. Kolodny notes that where only 10 religious organizations were officially registered in the country five years ago, there now are more than 70, including the LDS church. Indeed, the religious landscape is much more diverse now than it used to be, and in addition to the many Christian denominations in Ukraine, there now are groups who practice Buddhism, Bahai, Krishna Consciousness, "new age" spirituality, and Ukrainian paganism.

The current push toward religious pluralism has helped to solve several problems. For example, buildings that had been taken over by the government are being returned to the churches that had previously owned them. Also noteworthy is the fact that the Ukrainian Orthodox and Ukrainian Greek Catholic Churches, which were severely restricted during Soviet rule, now are able to operate without onerous government restrictions.

Other problems are in the process of being solved, Kolodny believes. These include granting privileges to religious groups in the form of tax

payments, and allowing religious groups to operate publishing houses and provide religious education facilities.

Of course, there are additional problems that appear to have no easy solution. The Ukrainian and Russian Orthodox churches have clashed; these clashes feature important political overtones that further complicate matters. Because the state regulated religion for decades, the churches that operated under communism have been unable to respond effectively to the challenge of a pluralistic marketplace; this too has political implications. The traditional religions are losing influence, and their financial position has been weakened.

Kolodny notes that people appear dissatisfied with religion based on ritual and with religion that emphasizes the "sinful nature" of human beings. Both of these, of course, are hallmarks of orthodoxy. It seems to me that elements of Mormon theology contrasts markedly with orthodoxy on these points. In comparison with the orthodox service, LDS meetings are quite spontaneous and vibrant. Furthermore, LDS theology presents a more optimistic view of human nature than does orthodox theology. An interesting study would be to examine proselytizing efforts that might be more effective if they were to emphasize these points.

The remedy Kolodny sees to the problems facing both the country and its citizens is twofold. He first recommends democratizing the religious laws even more than they are now. He also wants to see an above-church ideological institution which would encourage the citizenry to perceive the state in sacred terms. Under this overarching belief, churches would function to meet the spiritual needs of individuals.

It will be interesting to see how Ukraine deals with its changing religious landscape. There have been efforts to pass laws similar to that passed in Russia, restricting foreign proselytizing efforts and limiting the groups that can operate as religions. Such a reaction would be counter to what Kolodny envisions, and no doubt is not what Mormons would hope for. Mormonism's response to these challenges also will be fascinating to

watch. We often have heard, from church leaders as well as from our colleagues in MSSA, that among the greatest challenges facing the church is

its growth. By all appearances, the challenge continues in Ukraine.