

NEWSLETTER  
SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MORMON LIFE

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Volume 1 Number 1 April 6, 1979

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Organization Announced

At the ASA meetings held in San Francisco last fall, a special caucus was held for sociologists interested in the study of Mormon life. As a result of that meeting, a new organization was born--The Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life.

Some officers were elected at that meeting to serve until a formal constitution could be drawn up and elections held. Those officers include:

President:

Glenn M. Vernon, University of Utah

Vice President:

Armand Mauss, Washington State University

Secretary-Treasurer:

Marie Cornwall, Correlation Department, LDS Church

Council Members:

Arland Thornton, University of Michigan

JoAnn Menki, UCLA

Armand Mauss was directed to draw up a constitution for the new society and it will be voted on at the Society's spring meeting to be held on Thursday, April 5th at 5:15 in the Bing Pellinore Room of the convention hotel (Sheraton-Anaheim).

Membership in the new organization is open to anyone having a scholarly interest in Mormon life. The organization will publish a newsletter, sponsor programs, panels, and speakers, and promote the scholarly study of the social, cultural, and religious institutions of Mormonism as well as the attitudes and behaviors of Mormons as a people.

Anyone interested in joining this new society should fill out the attached membership form and return it to the address provided.

We are asking an initial membership fee of 2.00.

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Increasing Interest in Sociology of Mormonism

Glenn Vernon first offered a class entitled "The Sociology of Mormonism" at the University of Utah in 1972. He needed a textbook and some readings and so in 1974 he published Research on Mormonism, a book of readings. In 1975 he published a

textbook, The Sociology of Mormonism. Let me quote from the preface to his book of readings

Mormonism is a neglected area of research in the social sciences. In much of the past research which has taken religious affiliation into account the Mormon respondents typically constitute such a small percentage of the total respondents that they were classified in the "other" category and essentially ignored thereafter. Research focusing primarily upon some aspect of Mormonism has not been frequent. Change in this respect, however, has been taking place during the last few years.

Now, a good five years later, much more interest has been stirred as can be seen by the increasing number of studies on Mormon populations being presented at professional meetings or published in periodicals.

In 1977, at the PSA meetings in Sacramento, Glenn Vernon organized the first session at any professional meetings dealing with the Sociology of Mormonism. Four papers were presented. At the 1978 PSA meetings in Spokane a round table discussion was scheduled: The Sociology of Mormonism. The gathering was small, but the discussion was productive and provocative.

And this year there will be two sessions at the PSA meetings devoted to the Sociology of Mormonism:

Session 33: Sociology of Mormonism Friday, April 6, 8:30-10:15

Session 61: Religious Doctrines and Attitudes, April 7, 8:30-10:15

Wilford Smith of BYU has organized a panel discussion and a session on the Sociology of Mormonism at the Western Social Science Association meetings at Lake Tahoe, April 25th to 28th. The panel discussion is titled "Should There Be a Sociology of Mormonism" and panel members include:

Ted C. Smith, University of Utah  
Robert M. Gray, University of Utah  
John R. Christiansen, Brigham Young University  
Martin B. Hickman, Brigham Young University

Along with the growing interest in academic settings, there has been more interest at the LDS Church headquarters in systematic evaluation of programs, and activities which has resulted in some Church-wide research projects. With the increase in research efforts being sponsored by the Church, there has also been greater need for consultation with academicians who are interested in doing research for the Church or providing background information from their own previous research experiences.

And now with the organization of the Society for the Sociological Study of Mormon Life, we would hope to foster further interest in the scholarly study of Mormonism and Mormons.

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Papers being presented at the PSA Meetings:

Session 33: Sociology of Mormonism

Sociological Orientation and Mormon Theology

James T. Duke, Brigham Young University

Psychosocial Factors Affecting Low Rates of (Cancer Among Mormons

Robert M. Gray, University of Utah

"Training Up A Child In The Way He Should GO..."; The Differential Impact of Family and Other Socializing Agents Upon Orthodoxy Among Mormons

Charles Ainsworth, Washington State University

Armand Mauss, Washington State University

Participation by Religious Groups on Ratification of ERA in Nevada

James T. Richardson, University of Nevada-Reno

Session 61: Religious Doctrines and Attitudes

Doctrinal Consistency and L.D.S. Priesthood for Blacks

Wilford E. Smith, Brigham Young University

Changes in Attitude, Changes in Latitude: Differential Responses to Intellectual Marginality among Salt Lake and San Francisco Mormons

Julie Wolfe-Petrusky, University of Utah

Alcohol and Apostacy: The Determinants of Attitudes Toward Alcohol in an Abstinent Subculture

Armand Mauss, Washington State University

Charles Ainsworth, Washington State University

Papers being presented at the WSSA Meetings:

Session 19: Sociology of Mormonism

Religiosity and Spiritual Well-Being Among Mormons

James T. Duke, Brigham Young University

The Intellectual and the Mormon Church: Mahonri Young, A Case Study

Wayne K. Hinton, Southern Utah State College

Utah Migration Patterns 1955-1960, 1965-1970

Clark A. Davis, California State University-Chico

Reed H. Blake, Brigham Young University

By Their Fruits

Wilford E. Smith, Brigham Young University