

SSSML Newsletter

SOCIETY FOR THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF MORMON LIFE

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IN THIS ISSUE:

Presidential Message	1
Forthcoming Conferences	2
Other Announcements	2
Annual SSSML Business Meeting	2
Recent Conferences	3
Recent Publications	3

PRESIDENTIAL MESSAGE

In my new role as President of the SSSML, I want to first extend greetings and best wishes to all of you. May our entire membership enjoy continuing success in their scholarly and intellectual endeavors. Secondly, I want to begin sharing with you a few of my thoughts and feelings about the state of our Society, some future directions we may want to take, and to seek your support in strengthening and improving our position within the academic and intellectual community.

In addition to handling routine matters during our annual business meeting, considerable discussion revolved around what the SSSML has accomplished and what we have failed to accomplish as well as we might. We also brainstormed some ideas about how to build on our past successes and current standing. As I take stock of our Society's activities since 1977, I believe the SSSML has been instrumental in promoting interest and scholarly work in the study of Mormon life and culture. Perhaps the most notable indicator of this was our sponsorship of an

entire issue of sociological studies of Mormon life published in the *Review of Religious Research* (26:1). However, I believe we need to become involved in more high profile activities along these lines. An occasion which will present such an opportunity is coming up very shortly by way of the 1989 SSSR meetings that will be held in Salt Lake City. I invite your ideas, suggestions, and participation in this regard.

Another matter of concern centers around the fact that too often we have not been able to obtain enough research submissions to hold an exclusive *Society of Mormon Life* session at professional meetings. There are several reasons for this, one being that it's difficult, if not impossible to build a successful sociological career just researching and writing about Mormon life. This suggests to me that we need not only to take steps to increase interest and activity among our entire membership, but to broaden our prospects in still other ways. To borrow a phrase, we need to act as missionaries. There are a number of other good scholars and budding graduate students "out there" who are either interested in doing or are actually engaged in some sound work on Mormons. We need to find them and convert them to our sociological cause if only for a season. Some invited presentations is one way of expanding our base of support and professional reputation. Again, I invite your help and support. I would like to hear from any of you who know of such prospects.

In following newsletters, I will continue to share with you ideas and plans for future growth and development.

-Don Lindsey

ANNOUNCEMENTS OF FORTHCOMING CONFERENCES

Three scholarly societies, *The Society for the Scientific Study of Religion*, the *Religious Research Association*, and the *Association of Professors and Researchers in Religious Education*, will hold a large conference jointly in Chicago during October 28–30 (just before Halloween!). A brief general overview of this joint conference was offered in the last issue (June 1988) of this Newsletter. Included among the participants in this Chicago conference, as presenters or discussants of papers, will be several people known to readers of this Newsletter for their previous association with things Mormon: Hans Baer, Allen Bergin, Merlin Brinkerhoff, Marie Cornwall, Larry Iannaccone, Armand Mauss, James Richardson, Anson Shupe, Rodney Stark, Richard Williams, and Larry Young.

Events of special interest to SSSML members at this conference will include a paper by Marie Cornwall and Carmel Parker White, "Images of God and Images of Family among Feminist Mormons"; a general thematic session on feminist challenges to patriarchal religion (though not including Mormonism this time!); a paper by Rodney Stark, "Routine Revivals: The Mythical Burned-Over District"; a roundtable discussion on the Gallup Survey of the Religious State of the American People (with Gallup himself present); a plenary panel (again including Gallup) on the impact of religion on the 1988 national elections; panels on faith and value conflicts in the scientific study of religion; and a session on religion and family conflict, including a paper by Merlin Brinkerhoff and Eugen Lupri ("The Impact of Religious Denomination and Commitment on Spousal Violence"), and one by Ann Horton of BYU ("Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't

Enough").

Inquiries about registration and copies of the printed program for the conference should be directed to the SSSR/RRA Business Manager, Lorraine D'Antonio, Marist Hall 108, Catholic University of America, Washington, D.C. 20064. The conference site, as well as very inexpensive accommodations for participants, are being provided by the Bismarck Hotel in Chicago, Randolph at La Salle (60601), Phone: (312) 236-0123. Incidentally, the next (1989) joint conference of these organizations will be held in Salt Lake City, so it might be a good idea to join SSSR or RRA (\$24 per year each via Lorraine D'Antonio), in order to be kept abreast of plans for that event next Fall.

OTHER ANNOUNCEMENTS

- The annual SSSML Lectureship, co-sponsored by the Redd Center at BYU, will soon be awarded again for next Spring. Nominations are now in order (with some urgency) for both lecturer and location for the lecture. The lecture does not need to be delivered at BYU. Don't hesitate to nominate yourself (or have a friend do it!) if you have a research paper shaping up on a Mormon-related topic in the social sciences.
- A few SSSML members have still not paid their 1988 dues. The dues for 1989, at the same low price of \$3.00, are now payable any time—please!. Send dues to our new Secretary/Treasurer Kristen Goodman, 6942 South Hamilton Circle, West Jordan, Utah 84084.

ANNUAL SSSML BUSINESS MEETING

During the August *Sunstone Symposium* (see below), the "official" annual business of the SSSML was conducted by incoming President Donald B. Lindsey. Also present were Tim Heaton (Vice-President/President-elect), Kristen

Goodman (Secretary-Treasurer), Marie Cornwall (a past president), Armand Mauss (also a past president and still Newsletter reporter/coordinator), Marge Conder, Elbert Peck, Lesa Hong, Rex Cooper, Jim Smithson, and Ron Schow. After formal proceedings, the meeting was continued informally over lunch by all who could stay on. Among the topics discussed were:

- The possibility of an occasional publication under SSSML auspices for work still in progress (that could then be published in final form later elsewhere after feedback and refinement), something like what the late Glenn Vernon used to periodically publish as *Measuring Mormonism*.
- The need and/or feasibility of generating enough new papers each year to form two panels or sessions, one each in the Spring (for the PSA conference) and in the Summer/Fall (for either Sunstone or SSSR).
- The need to move our annual, official meeting to either Sunstone or SSSR auspices, rather than ASR, ASA, or SSSP auspices, as in previous years.
- The need to find a suitable candidate and location for the next SSSML Annual Lecture.
- The future mission(s), growth, and membership commitment in SSSML.
- Plans for replacing Armand as Newsletter reporter and coordinator.

SSSML members interested in having complete minutes for this meeting should contact Kristen Goodman at the above address.

RECENT CONFERENCES

The *Association for the Sociology of Religion* held its annual conference late in August in conjunction with the annual meetings of the *American Sociological Association*. The ASR (founded as the *American Catholic Sociological Association*)

was celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, and its sessions were more oriented than usual toward Catholic topics. Nevertheless there was a paper presented by SSSML members James Duke and Barry Johnson (Sociology - BYU) on social conditions conducive to conversion. Larry Young, also of BYU, was co-author of a demographic paper dealing with the Catholic Church. We are not aware of participation in ASR by other SSSML members this year. The ASR will meet with the ASA next summer in San Francisco.

The Tenth Annual *Sunstone Symposium* was held in Salt Lake City during August 17-20. SSSML sponsored a session there entitled "Women's Roles in Social Institutions: Insights for Members of the LDS Church," with panelists Marie Cornwall, Rex Cooper, and Susan Eberly, and with Tim Heaton as moderator. This session was followed by a business and luncheon meeting for members of SSSML (see above). Several of the sessions, including the opening plenary session, were devoted to celebrating and examining various aspects of the change in church policy toward blacks ten years ago. Many of the other sessions too were of direct relevance to a social science outlook on Mormon life, including sessions on women in the church; sexual expression among Mormons; doctrinal development in the church; Mormons and the peace and environmental movements; Mormonism in the Third World; the work of an interdenominational ministry to defected Mormons in Utah (The Society of St. Chad); Mormons and murders; and many other topics. Most of the sessions were taped, and the tapes are available through a commercial outlet. A fuller description of this program, abstracts of the papers, and information about the tapes can all be obtained by contacting the Sunstone Foundation, 331 South Rio Grande Street, Suite #30, Salt Lake City 84101-1136 (Phone: 801/355-5926).

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

BOOKS

No new books of scholarly significance on Mormon life have come to our attention recently, but in the last issue of this Newsletter, we did note the publication of *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders*, by Sillitoe and Allen. By now it is no surprise, especially to Utahns, that two other books on the same subject have recently been published: Steven Naifeh and Gregory White Smith, *The Mormon Murders* (New York: Widenfield and Nicholson Publishers, 1988) and *A Gathering of Saints: A True Story of Money, Murder, and Deceit* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), by Robert Lindsey, author of *The Falcon and the Snowman*. With hype from the Eastern media moguls, these last two books are getting much more attention than the earlier Sillitoe/Allen one, which is by far the most scholarly and balanced in nature. The Lindsey book too seems generally to be a responsible treatment, but the Naifeh and Smith handling of the subject is in the time-honored tradition of salacious Mormon-bashing. (It produced quite a ruckus, incidentally, at an "Author Meets Critics" session of the recent Sunstone conference). All three books have a big chance of ending up in movie and/or TV versions.

ARTICLES

From *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*, 21:3 (Fall, 1988):

- William A. Wilson, "Freeways, Parking Lots, and Ice Cream Stands: The Three Nephites in Contemporary Society."
- Lee Copeland, "From Calcutta to Kaysville: Is Righteousness Color-Coded?"
- Marvin Hill, "The 'New Mormon History' Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins."
- Davis Bitton, Review of *Mormons in Mexico: The Dynamics of Faith and Culture*, by F. Lamond Tullis.
- Kent Robson, Review of *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology*, by O. Kendall White, Jr.

From the *Journal of Mormon History*, 14 (1988):

- John F.C. Harrison, "The Popular History of Early Victorian Britain: A Mormon Contribution."
- E. Gary Smith, "The Office of Presiding Patriarch: The Primacy Problem."
- Ian G. Barber, "The Ecclesiastical Position of Women in Two Mormon Trajectories."

From *BYU Studies*, 27:3 (Summer, 1987):

- Edwin B. Firmage, "The Judicial Campaign against Polygamy and the Enduring Legal Questions."
- R. Collin Mangrum, "Mormonism, Philosophical Liberalism, and the Constitution."

From *Sunstone*, 12:2 (March, 1988):

- Terence L. Day, "A Parent's Guide: Sex Education or Erotophobia?"
- Eduardo Pagan, "Razing Arizona: The Clash in the Church over Evan Mecham."
- C. Jess Groesbeck, "The Smiths and their Dreams and Visions: A Psycho-Historical Study of the First Mormon Family."
- David Knowlton, "The Mystery of Conversion."
- Ian G. Barber, Review of *Unto the Islands of the Sea: A History of the Latter-Day Saints in the Pacific*, by R. Lanier Britsch.
- Armand L. Mauss, Review of *Mormon Neo-Orthodoxy: A Crisis Theology*, by O. Kendall White, Jr.
- Sunstone Staff, "Update on the Committee Organization of the Church's Presiding Quorums."

... and a couple of demographic studies that recently came to our attention:

- D. L. Anderton, L. Bean, J. D. Willigan,

and G. P. Mineau, "Adoption of Fertility Limitation in an American Frontier Population: An Analysis and Simulation of Socio-religious Subgroups." *Social Biology* 31:1-2 (Spring/Summer, 1984).

- K. A. Lynch, G. P. Mineau, and D. L. Anderton, "Estimates of Infant Mortality on the Western Frontier (early Utah): The Use of Genealogical Data." *Historical Methods* 18:4 (Fall, 1985).

And, finally ...

The July, 1988, issue of the Mormon History Association Newsletter, from which we got the last two entries, also featured an extensive bibliographic review of Mormon missionary work entitled, "Bibliography: LDS Missionary Work, Part I." It draws on all sorts of literature, both scholarly and religious. It will presumably be followed by Part II in the next issue of the MHA Newsletter in October. Information about the MHA, its conferences, and its publications, can be obtained by writing the Secretary, MHA, PO Box 7010, University Station, Provo, UT 84602.