

# MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Michael E. Nielsen, Editor

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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

MSSA sponsored an almost record number of sessions (four) in conjunction with last year's SSSR meetings in Montreal. In contrast, MSSA member attendance at these meetings was pretty sparse. This year we're cutting back to just two MSSA sponsored sessions for the meetings in Boston (see details below) while hoping that attendance will perk back up to a more representative level.

I want to take the little remaining space this column affords to acknowledge and thank Mike Nielsen for his dedicated efforts in producing this newsletter over the past number of years. It's arguably the most important mechanism through which our association functions, and Mike has almost single-handedly kept it going. Mike has one more issue to go as editor before ascending (or is it descending?) to the role of MSSA president. There's no doubt he will bring the same level of commitment and competence to these duties beginning this November. But in the meantime, perhaps the most concrete way we can all express our appreciation for his work is to

deluge him with Newsletter material for his final editorial Hurrah in the upcoming Fall issue. MSSA member accomplishments, notice of publications or presentations, interviews, book reviews, news stories, commentaries or letters to the editor, etc.—all such items will be welcomed, I'm sure, at <mnielsen@gsvms2.cc.gasou.edu>

## MONTREAL MSSA PROGRAM

The MSSA sessions in Montreal featured very diverse papers, illustrating the interesting work being done in Mormon social science research. In the session on Perspectives on Mormonism, paper topics ranged from James Duke's "Trends in American Religion, with Special Reference to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints," to Diana Mahony's "Light-Mindedness versus Lightheartedness: Conflicting Conceptions of Laughter Among Latter-day Saints." Likewise, the session devoted to Mormonism on the Margins included Ken and Daryl White's paper on Mormon Intellectuals, and Richley Crapo's "Ministering Angels and Eunuchs for Christ: Being Mormon in the Sexual Margins." International perspectives were offered by Dean Louder and Clyde Forsberg, whose witty presentations on aspects of Mormonism in Canada were joined with Richard Stamps' presentation on Mormonism in Taiwan. Warner Woodworth delivered the Glen M. Vernon Lecture. His address, "Working Toward Zion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century," is described in more detail later in the newsletter. These creative papers made the program a fine success.

## BOSTON CONFERENCE

Make plans now to attend our next meeting, set for November 5-7 at Boston's Swissotel. As we

have done for several years, our meeting will be held in conjunction with the Religious Research Association and the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion. RRA's conference theme is What Do We Know about Religious Institutions? And How Have We Come to Know It? The SSSR theme for the conference is The Sacred in the Secular: Finding "Religious" Dimensions in the World Beyond Religion. In addition, it is the 50th anniversary of both these organizations, and there will be several opportunities to take stock of social scientific work on religion.

For our part, MSSA is sponsoring two paper sessions in addition to the traditional breakfast-business meeting. One of these sessions will focus on conducting official or institutional church research. Tentatively scheduled to participate on this panel are Perry Cunningham, LDS Church; C. Kirk Hadaway, United Methodist Church; Richard Houseal, Church of the Nazarene; Cynthia Woolever, Presbyterian Church (USA); and John O'Hara, Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod.

The second session is titled Faith and Fathering. Participants will be David Dollahite, who will discuss his research on Mormon fathers, and Rob Palkovitz, who will describe work with Evangelical fathers. More details will be available in the next issue of the newsletter, but don't delay making arrangements to be in Boston this November!

## **MSSA PEOPLE IN THE NEWS**

MSSA members have been in the news during the past few months. If you know of other MSSA people in the news, pass them on to Michael Nielsen so that we can keep each other informed.

Gary Shepherd (sociology, Oakland U) was quoted in a Sunday, May 23rd New York Times article titled "Youthful Optimism Powers Mormon Missionary Engine." (Drawn from his

and his brother Gordon's recently published book, Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle, published U. of Illinois Press.) The front-page story described the role of missionary work in the church's growth, and described missionary characteristics and experiences.

Marie Cornwall (sociology, BYU) was quoted extensively in a June 25th Arizona Republic newspaper article on a murder case. The case involved Scott Falater, who was tried and convicted for murdering his wife. Jurors in the case asked questions about LDS beliefs and practices regarding family relations, temples, and potential conflicts among family members who do not share equal interest in the church. Cornwall fielded several questions for the Arizona Republic regarding these and other social aspects of the church.

Michael Nielsen (psychology, Georgia Southern U) was interviewed on Ideas and Issues, a radio program produced for the Tennessee Public Radio network. He discussed psychological research on religion during the program's May 23rd broadcast, which aired on WETS and most Tennessee Public Radio stations.

## **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

### **MSSA Elections and Dues**

Accompanying this issue of the newsletter is a ballot for new officer elections. The following individuals have been nominated for office:

President Elect: Daryl White

Secretary/Treasurer: Lynn Payne

Board Members: Cardell Jacobson, Mary Lou McNamara, Grant Underwood

*Please return the ballot along with your \$5.00 annual dues, if your dues are not current, to:*

Lynn Payne,

MSSA

Research Information Division, 18th Floor,

50 E. North Temple

Salt Lake City, UT 84150

## **New Book Released**

Women of Principle is the title of a new book published by MSSA member Janet Bennion. Published by Oxford University Press, Women of Principle is the first ethnography on contemporary Mormon polygynists. In view of current controversies regarding polygynists in Utah, this book should receive widespread attention.

## **New Monograph Series**

Remember that a new LDS monograph series has been announced. The South Florida-Rochester-St. Louis Studies in Religion and the Social Order (Scholars Press) has initiated a new subseries: Studies of Latter-day Saint Religion. The series will publish up to three monograph titles a year on any aspect of Latter-day Saint religion, but focusing in particular on Mormonism, culture and society. Inquiries or manuscript submissions should be addressed to: Danny L. Jorgensen, Editor, Studies of Latter-day Saint Religion, Department of Religious Studies, University of South Florida, 4202 East Fowler Avenue, CRP 107, Tampa, FL 33620.

## **Newsletter Change Pending**

The MSSA board has asked Mary Lou McNamara and Perry Cunningham to edit the newsletter. They graciously agreed to do this and their term will begin with the Spring 2000 issue. Please give them your heartfelt thanks, along with ideas for stories. Send items to the following name and address:

Mary-Lou McNamara  
MSSA  
Research Information Division  
18th Floor  
50 East North Temple  
Salt Lake City, UT 84150

## **WOODWORTH DELIVERS VERNON LECTURE**

Warner Woodworth, professor of organizational leadership and strategy at BYU, delivered the Glen M. Vernon Lecture at the MSSA/SSSR meeting in Montreal. The biannual invited lecture highlights the work of social scientists who have made a significant theoretical or practical impact on our understanding of Mormonism. Because of space constraints, we cannot include his entire 20 page paper. The following is a summary of his stimulating presentation, Working Toward Zion in the 21st Century, which described the work he has done to address economic problems faced by people throughout the world.

Professor Woodworth begins by describing The Social Legacy of the Industrial Revolution. Because Mormonism and the industrial revolution are contemporaneous social events, Woodworth begins by noting that "the wretched excesses of factory life and the dehumanization of workers, not only men but women and children too" shocked church leaders such as John Taylor and Heber C. Kimball. To place this reaction in perspective, Woodworth considers two opposing historical perspectives regarding this time period.

Optimistic historians focus on such developments as improved medical care, household conveniences, and increases in the living standard of industrialized nations. These generated significant improvements to people. More critical historians, however, suggest that industrialization has brought material goods and gadgets, but has not actually enhanced people's sense of meaning. Mindless entertainment and problems with drug abuse accompany heavy credit-card debt for many people in the U.S. and in other industrialized nations.

Mormons may be found among those who see industrialization positively or who see it negatively. Regardless of the position one takes on

this issue, Woodworth suggests that the church and its members must be concerned about economic disparities and difficulties that affect the world.

The enormous growth of the church is one reason that Mormons must address these problems. With more Mormons living outside the United States than within it, the church faces new challenges that are reflected by the changing proportions of people who are members of the church. Mormons are no longer predominantly middle-class residents of the Western U.S. Mormons also should be concerned about economic problems because converts to the church no longer leave their home nations for the Wasatch Front's middle-class. Instead, converts to the church are encouraged to remain where they live. This means that a greater proportion of the membership lives in extreme poverty, and face personally the huge inequities that exist throughout the world. Quoting Matthew Cowley, Woodworth agrees that "...you can't have peace of mind and be in want materially. You can't have the spirit of the gospel in your hearts with an empty stomach...."

Woodworth suggests that the solution to the world's temporal challenges can be found in LDS church teachings. The practical application of true Christianity can resolve the crises facing the world. People who "consecrate what they have—money, time, talents, and possessions" can become "a truly Zion people." They work to reduce the inequities between themselves and others.

While hopeful of changes for the better, he sees change occurring gradually over time, and not in sudden, apocalyptic events. Woodworth suggests several things that can help to create the positive changes that he desires. These emphasize various institutional church programs, private initiatives developed by individuals, professional service, family lifestyles, non-governmental organizations, and public entrepreneurship.

The institutional church has the welfare program as its primary means for creating temporal change. Donations of money and goods to the program are combined with labor at farms and canneries, all with the intent to aid people in need. This program has broadened to include donations to help people suffering from natural or created disasters, often in concert with other religious charity or service organizations. Woodworth notes that two new institutional opportunities for service have arisen recently. The first of these, the service missionary program, holds the potential of matching the number of proselytizing missionaries, and addresses directly people's physical and economic needs. The second of these is the development of Latter-day Saint Charities, a nonprofit foundation established by the church but with its own CEO, board, and paid staff.

This non-governmental organization (NGO), which is able to help people in countries where the church is unable to proselytize, is involved in digging wells, assisting farmers, and offering technical assistance in diverse countries.

Personal private initiatives can have similar kinds of effects, albeit probably on a smaller scale. Woodworth sees Mormons being involved in diverse efforts to benefit other people. Whether fund-raising for the Salvation Army, fighting child abuse, or working with the NAACP, LDS church members can demonstrate that "we truly are our brother's keeper."

Professional service opportunities provide another way for Mormons to meet people's physical needs. Woodworth sees this occurring in two basic ways. The first is the providing of pro bono professional service. One of the better-known examples of this kind of activity is the Academy of LDS Dentists, which offers dental care, and collects and distributes used dental equipment to needy areas of the world. The second approach to professional service is in the private business sector, where innovation can provide capital to economic ventures, or can otherwise aid people

seeking to better their economic situation. For example, a CEO determined to establish a sewing factory in the rural Guatemala region where he served a mission years earlier. By doing so, hundreds of new jobs were created, and profits increased for his company. In the U.S. or other developed countries, business leaders can create corporate day-care centers for employees' children, or follow Spencer W. Kimball's practice of paying "top dollar" in employee wages. Woodworth also suggests that entrepreneurs about to retire can turn the company over to the employees, rather than to a competitor who may close down the operation. These are a few of the avenues for change that Woodworth urges professionals to consider.

Essential to the establishment of Zion is proper attention to family lifestyles. Parents can do much to teach children priorities "focus(ed) on the things of eternity." On the premise that our priorities are reflected in how we spend our money and time, Woodworth suggests that we can reduce spending on luxuries and wants so that we can focus more on the world's needs. Rather than pay for an expensive vacation at a resort, people can "join a Center for Humanitarian Outreach and Intercultural Exchange (CHOICE) expedition and spend the equivalent funds for Third World travel and service." On a smaller scale, families can volunteer at food kitchens, or offer a "social tithe," which involves donating ten percent of one's time each month to service projects for people in need.

Private Non-Governmental Organizations offer a vehicle by which people can collaborate to help others. One of the more well-known is the Ouelessebougou-Utah Alliance, organized some 15 years ago by Utahns desiring to help people in Africa. They focus their efforts on a region of Mali, and have helped dig wells, train health care workers, build schools, and establish a village bank that enables "the poorest of the poor" to obtain credit. Other NGOs are engaged in "micro lending credit programs," which help individuals secure small loans to finance self-employed

businesses. Programs such as these have been developed to help people in the Philippines, Central America and South America. Much of Woodworth's own efforts have been focused on facilitating programs such as these, and he offers extensive evidence that they are working.

Woodworth ends his paper by describing a theology of social stewardship. Scriptural sources for the ideals underlying the establishment of Zion are combined with quotes from religious and secular figures, all of whom share a sense of social responsibility. Included among these quotes were the following:

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it's the only thing that ever has (Margaret Mead).

Earth provides enough to satisfy every man's need but not enough for every man's greed (Mahatma Gandhi).

For the earth is full and there is enough and to spare (D&C 104:17).

Zion will extend, eventually, all over this earth. There will be no nook or corner, upon the earth, but what will be in Zion. It will all be Zion (Brigham Young).

The growth of wealth in the hands of a few individuals threaten(s) us with greater danger today than anything that can be done by outsiders... God does not design that there should be classes among us, one class lifted above another (George Q. Cannon).

The mission of the Church is to... transform society so that the world may be a better and more peaceful place (David O. McKay).

Let us not be satisfied with just giving money. Money is not enough, money can be got, but they (the poor) need your hearts to love them. So spread your love everywhere you go (Mother

Teresa).

We should employ our surplus means in a manner that the poor can have employment and see before them a competence and the conveniences of life (Lorenzo Snow).

I am of the opinion that my life belongs to the community and as long as I live, it is my privilege to do for it whatever I can (George Bernard Shaw).

We will take a moral view, a political view, and see the inequality that exists in the human family.... It is an unequal condition of mankind... What is to be done? The Latter-day

Saints will never accomplish their mission until this inequality shall cease on the earth (Brigham Young).

It was the doctrine of Joseph Smith... that a religion which has not the power to save people temporally and make them prosperous and happy here, cannot be depended upon to save them spiritually, to exalt them in the life to come (Joseph F. Smith).

I expect the Saints to give money for the support of the poor... and if they do not do it, their religion is vain.... We preach a religion which very materially affects men's purses; and