

MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER

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President's Message

There are several business items that I would like to bring to your attention.

First and most importantly, it is time once again for elections of new officers.

Included in the newsletter is a ballot of the candidates. Please use it to vote for the new officers. I want to thank the people who have served as past-president and as board members. Gary Shepherd, as past president, and board members Cardell Jacobson, Mary Lou McNamara, and Grant Underwood, have served MSSA very well during the past two years. Please extend to them your thanks as their term of service comes to an end in the coming few months. If you have any suggestions or ideas for MSSA, pass them along to Gary, Cardell, Mary Lou, Grant or me.

We are working on several fronts to bolster awareness of MSSA and to attract new members to the association. The brochure is now ready to be printed, thanks to the work of several people who contributed their time and talents to its design and content. The next issue of the newsletter will include a copy of the brochure. Give some thought to your colleagues, students and others who might benefit from membership in MSSA.

We hope to increase our numbers during the coming years so that MSSA can remain a vital contributor to our understanding of religion and society in general, and Mormonism in particular.

The MSSA webpage now is available online. At this point it consists of the text found in the brochure. In the coming months, look for copies of articles that have appeared in the newsletter, links to relevant sites and other features to be included on the webpage. Its address is

<http://www.psywww.com/psyrelig/mssa>. If you have comments or suggestions about the web page, please pass them along.

Mike Nielsen

Minutes of the MSSA Business Meeting held October 22, 2000 in Houston, Texas

- Lynn Payne (secretary) reported on the finances and membership of the MSSA. Tim Heaton donated the \$200 honorarium for the Glenn Vernon lecture to the MSSA. The Association had about \$1000 in a savings account and approximately \$300 in checking before incurring costs for the MSSA breakfast. (Those present made donations toward that cost.)
- Mary Lou McNamara (newsletter editor) asked for volunteers who might be willing to contribute a book review to the newsletter. Marcus Martins and Ken White volunteered.

- A discussion ensued about finalizing the MSSA brochure for recruitment (e.g., it should be printed on light-colored, high quality paper; it could be mailed to the Mormon History Association, Sunstone, and Dialogue subscribers; it needs logo). Contacts with MHA and Dialogue were discussed.
- An MSSA Web site was discussed. Mike Nielsen (president) offered to host it at his psychology of religion web site to reduce upkeep and maintenance costs.
- Suggestions for sessions or participants in sessions were made for the forthcoming joint meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and Religious Research Association in Columbus. Suggestions included Marcus Martins and Max Stanton from BYU Hawaii; something from the Research Information Division (LDS Church); and a session on polygamy.
- The SSSR/RRA meetings in Salt Lake City in 2002 were discussed. Some of the suggestions were have MSSA play a more prominent role in SLC compared to last time the meetings were held there; encourage tours/recitals at the Joseph Smith Building and/or Conference Center; tap Marie Cornwall's ideas about how to make this a successful conference; encourage participation from non-LDS churches, such as having the Calvary Baptist Choir sing and having the Hari Krishna's from Spanish Fork participate in some way; and have an author meets critic session on the forthcoming book by Tim Heaton and Cardell Jacobson.
- Nominations were obtained for elections

which will take place in the spring of 2001. These officers will begin their two-year service in the fall of 2001 after the SSSR/RRA meetings in Columbus, Ohio.

Book Review:

Leaving the Fold: Candid Conversations with Inactive Mormons. By James W. Ure, Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999, 253 pp.

Marcus H. Martins

Book reviews are often prone to generate disagreements and at times even resentment. In fact, in Brazil they are commonly called "book critiques," which seems to more accurately describe their function. So, as a good Brazilian I will endeavor to write a "critique" of Ure's book.

This book is not a social-scientific treatment of the subject, and it never claims to be. The author, James Ure, begins by stating that this book represented a personal journey in which he was trying to make sense of his own inactivity in the LDS Church by interviewing people who, like him, had chosen inactivity in the Church. However he emphasizes that this is not an anti-Mormon work, and that its purpose is to create and foster understanding.

I read the book from the perspective of a former LDS bishop trying to understand the dynamics of defection and inactivity, hoping to learn how to assist those who are struggling in the LDS religion. Although I enjoyed reading the book, because of Ure's choice of respondents I could not obtain any insights that might have widespread application.

The eighteen respondents were not chosen at random; in fact, one of them was Ure's

mother. But the main problem is that it is questionable whether this group of respondents, during their years of activity, would have ever been considered a representative cross-section of the Church membership. For example, one respondent claimed to have been not “a regular attender, but ... a frequent attender” who smoked even while holding Church callings, and never believed in the authenticity of the Book of Mormon. Another, in response to the question of ever possessing a testimony answered, “I think that those who say they did are just saying they did . . .” and later claimed to have been married in the temple without being active in the Church. Another stated that he not only did not have a testimony, but also served a full-time mission without ever bearing a testimony.

If Ure had included a substantial number of inactive Latter-day Saints who had once been committed believers and who had lived in harmony with the standards of the Church before their defection, he would have provided a far more useful picture of the dynamics of defection; one that might possibly even describe some of the processes taking place in Chile, Philippines, and other areas of fast growth in membership and high rates of inactivity.

Yet the book is worthwhile in sharing the experiences of a group of individuals whose accounts seem honest and candid. Most of the respondents did not ask for anonymity, and given their inactive status one could argue that they really felt free to speak their minds. For an outsider, these stories draw a picture of a specific time in which the Church had to face head-on the challenges of modernity and diversity. Most of the respondents identified the source of the challenges to their faith as being: (a) Church attacks on intellectualism; (b) the Church’s

political conservatism and perceived intolerance of liberals; (c) the priesthood ban for Blacks; or (d) women’s issues, including the Church’s opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment and the powerlessness perceived by some LDS female intellectuals. As those familiar with the history of the Church may see, such issues place the respondents’ loss of faith mainly around the 1970’s and 80’s.

One of the problems in the interviews may have been caused by Ure’s self-identification with the experiences of the respondents. In some cases, he “goes native” and asks leading questions, offers his own opinions, or encourages speculation. For example in one interview he asks, “Today many people are disillusioned or become inactive because of the issues of censorship. In 1993 and since, we’ve had active Mormons resign or be excommunicated as a result of their desire to speak out on issues. For some women I think divorce and their status as divorcees have alienated them. What’s your view?”

If there is a significant lesson in this book it may very well be the power of tradition among these inactive pioneer descendants, especially the legacy of sacrifice by pioneers. Since the interviews took place during 1996-97, the re-enactments of the trek across the plains and other events marking the sesquicentennial of the pioneers’ entrance in the Salt Lake Valley no doubt made the pioneer theme influential. Almost all respondents stated that they would rather not formally sever their ties with the Church by way of excommunication because, as one respondent stated, “I’m proud of our 19th century heritage of suffering for the right to practice a peculiar religious tradition.” Or as another respondent put it, “You’re loyal

to it. By damn, you're loyal to it." On the other hand, another respondent defended his membership saying, "I think that in the small chance that I am wrong, that I want that insurance policy."

In conclusion, if one looks at Ure's book as sort of a journalistic work that offers a snapshot of a narrow segment of the Church population rather than a panoramic view, then one might accept it as a valuable contribution to the body of literature related to Mormonism in the 20th century.

James W. Ure is the author of two non-fiction books, *Hawks and Roses* and *Bait for Trout, Being the Confessions of an Unorthodox Angler*. He has written for the newspapers *Salt Lake Tribune* and *Deseret News*, as well as for national magazines. He is the recipient of several writing awards. A graduate of the University of Utah, he works in advertising and marketing in Salt Lake City.

Marcus H. Martins is an associate professor of religion at Brigham Young University-Hawaii. A native of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, he often lectures around the U.S. on leadership and diversity issues from a doctrinal standpoint, having produced two videos on these subjects. He is a former consultant in systems and organizational analysis, and holds a Ph.D. in sociology from Brigham Young University.

Article

"Tell Eve About Serpent!" A Qualitative Study of the Effects of Temple Participation in the Lives of Young Adult Mormons

Janet M. Kincaid

I arrived at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, California in 1995 to pursue a master's degree in Religion and Society. As

one of four Mormons enrolled at the GTU at the time, I chose as my thesis to do a qualitative research project on the effects of the temple in the lives of Mormons.

With the permission of the stake president and the cooperation of three bishops, I began to solicit participants from three wards in the Oakland California Stake. I hoped to gather participants from a broad age range. However, as a result of taboos against open discussion of the temple, I was only able to attract individuals within a narrow age group. Furthermore, those who chose to participate in the study had a certain level of familiarity with the researcher. In the case of 12 of the 13 men and women who participated, I attended the same ward at one time or another. The thirteenth participant was a woman who lived in Washington, D.C. who I met through an online discussion group for LDS graduate students.

All participants were asked to take part in a one to three hour interview, complete a demographic and informational survey, and participate in any necessary follow-up interviews. At the time of their initial interviews, five of the participants were between the ages of 19 and 24, seven were between 25 and 30, and one was between 31 and 34. Eight were women, five were men. Eight of the participants were single (never married), one was single (divorced), and four were married. Eight had served missions, five had not. Two participants, both women, were converts (one had been an atheist, the other Catholic).

From the outset, the study sought to answer two core questions: 1) what are the effects of temple participation in the lives of Mormons and 2) what role does preparation or lack of preparation play in the temple experience? The catalyst for the study was a comparison

of the author's personal initial experience with the temple and the polar opposite experiences of the author's mother and a close friend.

Nine participants discussed their preparation for the temple. The spectrum of types of preparation varied widely and was largely inconsistent across the board. Overall, almost all of the participants felt a better job could have been done preparing them for the temple and felt that barriers to discussion of the temple could be modified somewhat to allow for more information sharing and the ability to debrief following the initial experience.

In analyzing the data regarding overall initial temple experiences, it was determined that the best way to present the data would be along gender-based lines. To this end, the participants' interviews were coded under the following broad categories: "Men's Experiences," "Women's Experiences," and "General Reasons for Participating in Temple."

Interestingly, in the case of those who participated in this study, the emerging data exhibited a discrepancy between what the literature said people's temple experiences should be and what they actually were. More significantly, the data showed that men's experiences with the temple were vastly different from women's. In particular, differences emerged when it came to why they participate, what message(s) they receive relative to their gender, and how they address any inconsistencies.

The findings of the study regarding men's experiences were more consistent with the literature than were women's. In other words, the men did not have as many clearly defined issues with the temple as the women

did, and their experiences had a tendency to echo the available literature and/or commentary on the temple. Women, on the other hand, had many issues with the temple.

There were several overarching themes regarding the effects of temple participation for the men. These were broken down into the following categories and subcategories: initial endowment experience (venturing into the unknown, fleeting doubts, walking by faith, being caught up in the spirit); initiatory ordinances (intimacy); understanding the priesthood (salvific understanding of the priesthood; priesthood and unity; purity of the power); and dealing with issues and reconciling contradictions (understanding gender roles; cultural constructs).

For women, the effects of going to the temple broke down into categories and subcategories as follows: initial endowment experience (stress and anxiety versus excitement, expectation of new doctrine, discrepancies from preconceived ideas about ritual, some minor themes); garments and the essence of womanhood (practical issues, sexuality and garments, guarding their garments' sacrality, other perspectives); understanding the priesthood (plain language, explicit/implicit language, men and priesthood, shared responsibility, women exercising priesthood, contingencies of exercising priesthood); initiatory ordinances; and dealing with issues and reconciling contradictions (role of women in the church/gospel/temple, portrayal of the relationship between Adam and Eve).

Finally, the data regarding the differences that motivate men and women to participate in the temple took an interesting turn. Men talked about going to the temple "because

of” what they got from the temple. Women, on the other hand, talked about attending the temple "in spite of" certain contradictions. More specifically, men seemed to talk about the temple in more abstract language, whereas women seemed to talk more about their highly personal relationship to the temple and its teachings. As was noted previously and will be discussed more momentarily, women go to the temple "in spite of..." while men go "because of..." Because of what, though? In one word: blessings.

The category of blessings was multi-dimensional for men and ranged from the seemingly banal to the sublime. Blessings received included increased knowledge of things both secular and religious, closeness to their spouses as a result of being together in the temple, answers to prayers or questions, having a place to retire to in order to escape the world, feelings of inspiration and perspective, and development of deep and constant spirituality. The opportunity to serve others through temple participation was also mentioned as a blessing of the temple.

In general, men's experiences were far more textbook than women's in that the men's experiences most closely mirrored experiences described in church literature regarding the temple. All of the men in this study echoed almost verbatim what church books (such as those by Boyd K. Packer or Michael Wilcox) outline as the desired results of temple participation in the lives of Mormons. Each of these men felt they came away from the temple with at least three things: the information necessary to enter into God's presence at the end of this life, a better understanding of their relationship to God, and the ability to receive guidance and peace through obedience to God's

commandments to participate in the temple.

Whereas most men seemed to attend the temple "because of..." women seemed to participate in the temple "in spite of..." In other words, men typically attended the temple because of the blessings it provides. Women participate in the temple in spite of the ambivalence temple ritual can create for them and about their roles. For the women in this study, this meant overlooking some of the subtleties in the message about women, their roles, and their authority. Most of these women also attended the temple because of the peace, understanding, insight, and comfort they experience when they go. And yet, in the back of their minds and at the forefront of their beings, they were left to qualify almost all of their responses about the temple with the conjunction "but."

The most prevalent concept in this category was women's struggle with the idea of needing a man in order to gain access to God versus the idea of accessing God without an intermediary. Single women especially struggled with this idea and most found it contradictory to the doctrines they had been taught concerning humanity and their relationship to God. Each of the women in this study identified strongly with God as someone who was personal and each said they felt they had a solid relationship with God. As a result, most of the women expressed an inability to reconcile the idea of a personal god with the idea of or need for a man/husband as an intermediary between women and the divine. Many women saw this as a cultural and social construct within the church and less as an absolute truth. Unfortunately, in their minds the implications of the construct have acquired a dogmatic character. Although they experienced all of the things the church teaches members one will experience, they

were often left with more questions than answers.

Lastly, there were general, non-gender specific reasons why those who participated in the study attend the temple. These included: relationship to God, influence of the Spirit, transformation, feelings, and meaning. Finally, all of those who participated in this study brought up the issue of secrecy and the aura of non-disclosure that surrounds the temple.

The challenges of researching and writing about the temple were myriad, to say the least. Issues of secrecy and overarching taboos surrounding discussion of the temple resulted in a limited range of participants. Indeed, no one over 35 participated and no one who was not somewhat acquainted with the researcher participated. The amount of data amassed from a mere 13 interviews was equally daunting. However, despite the challenges and limitations to the study, this work does make some significant contributions. In particular, this study supports the value of qualitative research and contributes to the growing body of work on Mormon life and identity on the religious landscape.

There is potential for future studies of the effects of the temple, which could include more specific research. For example, a study that focuses on specific populations of interest such as Mormon youth, single women, single men, minorities/ethnic groups, converts versus life-long members and so on are among the possibilities. Another could include issues of interest, such as members' proximity to temples and level of attendance, how the unendowed view the temple, how the temple shapes cultural and social constructs, and how it figures into Mormon identity.

In the end, though, any discussion of the temple will always be met with a certain amount of difficulty and suspicion, not to mention possible ecclesiastical repercussions. And yet, next to the Book of Mormon, the temple is the most powerful symbol of Mormon identity—both internally and externally. It encompasses and completes the entire canon of Mormon doctrine and behavior. To not examine this element of Mormon life and faith is to miss the lifeblood of Mormon culture and identity.

Perfect bound, soft-cover copies of the author's master's thesis ("Tell Eve About Serpent!" A Qualitative Study of the Effects of Temple Participation in the Lives of Young Adult Mormons. Berkeley, Ca.: Graduate Theological Union, 2000) are available for \$15 (141 pp. including illustrations, tables, and appendices and shipping and handling) at jmkincaid@aol.com or jmkincaid@paperloop.com.

Janet Kincaid graduated from George Mason University in Fairfax, Virginia in 1995. She then moved to Berkeley, California to pursue a master's degree in Religion and Society at the Graduate Theological Union. She graduated with honors in May 2000. Her area of emphasis is the sociology of Mormonism. In addition, she has an interest in Islamic life in America. She presented this research in October 2000 at the joint meetings of the SSSR/RRA. It was also presented at Sunstone West (March 2000 and April 2001). Ms. Kincaid is currently employed as managing editor of books and project director of an online bookstore for a B2B publisher in San Francisco, California. She may eventually go on for a doctorate in

religion and psychology with an emphasis in women's studies.

Article

Socioeconomic Attainment of Mormons

Tim B. Heaton

Dr. Tim B. Heaton gave the biennial Glenn M. Vernon lecture at the year 2000 meetings of the MSSA, RRA, and SSSR in Houston. His presentation was based on analyses of several U.S. data sets in which Mormons are self-identified. A complete version of this research, including hypotheses, tables, and graphs, will be included in a planned book. What follows are his conclusions.

Do Mormons have higher socioeconomic attainment? With regards to education, the answer is a modest yes. Mormons are clearly more likely to complete high school and attend college. This difference remains evident after taking into account family background, and can be observed for males and females. But the value placed on education does not appear to extend to post-graduate training. Thus, the educational homogeneity among Mormons is at least as important a distinguishing feature as is their higher attainment. Even more remarkable, however, is the higher educational attainment of Mormons who attend church on a weekly basis. The implication for socioeconomic status is that active Mormons are unusual in their level of educational attainment. This phenomenon, in conjunction with the historical transformation of the Salt Lake Valley from an arid wilderness to a thriving metropolis, most likely accounts for the perception that Mormons are upwardly mobile and successful.

What accounts for the higher educational achievement of participating Mormons? No

doubt, some would point to the historical record of economic survival, the acceptance of the achievement ethic, and the emphasis on individual progress as elements of Mormon experience that have created a subculture that values education. But the data reported here are not entirely consistent with that record. Educational expectations expressed by LDS youth are not especially high. Moreover, indicators of socioeconomic success such as occupational status and income do not distinguish Mormons as much as do college attendance and educational homogeneity.

We suggest a more institutional explanation for the higher educational achievement of participating Mormons. The LDS Church is managed by a lay clergy, except for a relatively small number of top leaders and a bureaucracy to manage records, monetary contributions, and physical facilities. But clerical leaders are just the tip of the iceberg. Each local congregation (usually consisting of a few hundred people) is staffed by numerous lay positions. Separate organizational units for children under 12, adolescent men, adolescent women, adult women, two groups of adult men, Sunday school lessons, boy scouts, and single adults each generate several callings—the LDS term for voluntary positions in the organization. In addition, records must be kept, music must be provided, and social activities must be planned. The general expectation is that most adults will hold at least one calling. Youth are socialized into this pattern by serving in callings in the youth organizations. Callings require a variety of abilities such as teaching, organizational management, music, and computer skills. A Mormon's sense of identity and belonging in the organization is enhanced by experience in these callings. Successful performance in callings brings status and

increased responsibility in subsequent callings, while failure in one's calling can be a source of embarrassment. While the callings given to men and women differ, the expectation that participating members will be committed to serve the organization through callings is gender neutral.

The centrality of lay participation accounts for much of the pattern of higher education among participating Mormons. College education provides cultural capital necessary for satisfactory performance in many callings. Whether teaching lessons, organizing activities, providing music, or keeping track on the unit's budget, college education increases the likelihood that an individual will feel comfortable in the relevant calling. Those who feel they are not as able or talented and thus do not accept callings are less likely to become integrated into the congregation, especially when other people seem so capable. In short, organizational structure integrates those with college experience into the local congregation.

At the upper end of the educational distribution, the skills required by professional degrees or post-graduate education are in less demand. Indeed, such In sum, Mormon beliefs about gaining intelligence and eternal progression are most likely to be manifest in the realm of education. Emphasis on pragmatism along with sub-themes of anti-intellectualism and distrust of human reason may act to curtail educational achievement at the high end in science and the humanities. Emphasis on the value of work is also counterbalanced by an emphasis on the importance of family life and nonmaterial values so that the occupational prestige and income of Mormons is not all that different than the national average.

stringent requirements to fill local positions would leave many congregations understaffed. At the same time, undercurrents of anti-intellectualism and the expectation that women will have primary responsibility for raising above average-size families dampen aspiration for post-graduate education. This is not to imply that Mormons with post-graduate education leave the LDS Church. They are about as likely to attend as those who stop with a college degree. But, with the exception of administrative skills, post-graduate education does not increase the cultural capital needed to fill positions, and so does not increase integration into the organization.

Overall differences in employment status, occupational prestige, income, poverty, welfare receipt and achievement values are not dramatic. Mormon women, however, are at a socioeconomic disadvantage in their own occupational prestige and income, probably because of their greater focus on maternal roles. But because they are more likely to be married, they enjoy a modest advantage over other women in family income. Consistent with emphasis on familial roles, LDS women are also less likely to work full-time.

Tim Heaton obtained a doctoral degree from the University of Wisconsin in 1979. He worked for LDS Research and Evaluation in the early 1980s and has taught sociology at BYU since 1980. His current research focuses on families and children's well being in Latin America.

Announcements

The 2001 MSSA annual meeting will be held in Columbus, Ohio in conjunction with the meetings of the Society for the Scientific

Study of Religion and the Religious Research Association, October 18-21 at the Adams Mark Hotel. The site is in the downtown area not far from parks, shopping, regional museums, and the historic German Village. Conference information is available from Mark Chaves, Mchaves@u.arizona.edu or Robert E. Beckley, rbeckley@mail.wtamu.edu.

MSSA dues are \$5.00 per year and are now payable. To keep your membership current, please send a check to MSSA in care of Cardell Jacobson, Department of Sociology, 880 SWKT, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602. If you currently owe membership dues, you will receive a notice in this mailing. Anyone with a mailing label printed with 2000 or earlier owes dues.