

# MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

Vol. 22, No. 2

Fall 2001

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### **President's Message**

I hope to see you at our upcoming meeting in Columbus. In addition to the usual interesting sessions at the conference, there will be two paper sessions sponsored by MSSA. One is an authors-meet-critics review of *Mormon Passage*, by Gary and Gordon Shepherd. The other session, "Mormons at the Millennium," will feature research on the state of Mormon health, drug use, religiosity, and Mormonism in Japan. Don't miss them!

We also will have our annual business meeting. A few words are in order about this meeting. First, DO plan to be there! Among other things, we will discuss how we might most effectively utilize our newly-completed brochure to facilitate our growth. Second, plan to be there, but DO NOT come at the usual time. Because of a memorial service being held early Sunday morning, our business meeting is scheduled for Friday at noon. Please make note of this change, and plan to come to the meeting on Friday.

This marks the end of my term as president. I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of the board members for their efforts to

help the organization. I also want to offer a special thank you to each of you who have paid your annual dues. Your support greatly facilitates the study of Mormon life.

Ours may be a small community, but I am deeply gratified to be part of it. I share with you an intense interest in understanding Mormonism, its place in society, and its meaning to individuals. Together we can work hard and thoughtfully to improve our understanding of religion, and share with others the fruits of our labors.

Mike Nielsen

### **Details on the next MSSA Meeting**

The next MSSA meeting will be held during the joint meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and Religious Research Association at the Adams Mark Hotel in Columbus Ohio October 19-21, 2001. SSSR's theme is "Mainstreaming the Scientific Study of Religion" to take stock of the ways in which social scientific knowledge about religion does and does not remain outside the social scientific and public mainstream. RRA's theme is "Interorganizational Religions in Religious Research."

MSSA is sponsoring three sessions on the program. In chronological order, the first is the MSSA business meeting, which will be Friday at 12-1. The second will be Saturday at 1:15-2:45, "Author Meets Critics: *Mormon Passage* by Gary Shepherd and

Gordon Shepherd,” with panelists Matt Bahr, Margaret Poloma, and Michael Donahue. The third is Sunday at 8-9:30, “Mormons at the Millennium,” with four papers. The papers are “Mormons and Health,” by Ray Merrill and Stephen Bahr; “Mormon Religiosity at the Millenium,” by Cardell Jacobson; “Crime Victimization and Drug Use: A Comparison of Mormons and Non-Mormons,” by Stephen Bahr”; and “Latter-day Saints in Japan: A Contemporary Perspective,” by John Hoffman.

The Adams Mark Hotel is in the heart of downtown Columbus, a block from the state capitol building and within walking distance of several theaters, including the historic and recently restored Ohio Theatre. German Village, an old and picturesque residential and dining district, is also within walking distance, as is the Short North, a “hip” area with restaurants and galleries. These points of interest should add to the experience of attending the conference.

**Book Review:**

*Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons.* By Jan Shipps, Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 2000, 235 pp., \$34.95.

*Daryl White, Jr.*

Jan Shipps’ latest book on Mormonism is a truly insightful examination of major changes in the church from its inception to the present, especially the profound transformation since World War II. These changes began manifesting themselves at precisely the point Shipps encountered Mormonism in Logan, Utah in 1960, where her husband had accepted a job at Utah State University. A Methodist who became fascinated with Mormonism, Shipps completed her undergraduate degree at USU

and her Ph.D. in history at the University of Colorado. Her first published article on Mormon racial policy and her dissertation on Mormon politics preceded a number of papers and articles culminating in her classic *Mormonism: The Story of a New Religious Tradition*. This book firmly established her as a leading historian and scholar of the Mormon phenomenon. With her skillful use of historical materials illuminating the Mormon past and unusual insight as a direct observer during the past forty years, *Sojourner in the Promised Land* will only enhance her reputation as an astute scholar. Moreover, her use of a sociological conceptual framework and research techniques results in a superb analysis of both historical and contemporary Mormonism, especially the transformation she identifies with the post-war period corresponding to her biography as a Mormon scholar.

Both the Prologue and Epilogue raise questions of particular interest to social scientists. Anthropologists and sociologists especially will find much for understanding Mormonism and Jan Shipps’ relationship to it. Though no specific chapter in the book utilizes Ferdinand Tönnie’s distinction between *gemeinschaft* and *gesellschaft*, Shipps believes that Tönnie’s conceptual framework provides the “most parsimonious theoretical explanation” for what has happened to Mormonism during the past four decades. The Mormonism that she encountered in Logan in 1960, which surely characterized other rural communities in the Mormon cultural area, was classic *gemeinschaft*, where the community was bound by face-to-face interaction and united “in spite of all separating factors.” But it has given way to a *gesellschaft* Mormonism that is “more impersonal,” and more “legal than familial,” with people “essentially

separated in spite of all uniting factors' ” (p. 380). In some quarters, efforts to establish unity have produced those “cookie cutter Mormons” associated with contemporary stereotypes that differ from the range she found among Mormons in Logan. Shipp now recognizes the *gemeinschaft* Mormonism of Logan, with its clearly delineated boundaries between saints and gentiles, as a “tribal culture” with an “auxiliarized institution,” that is, semi-autonomous and decentralized auxiliaries—e.g., Relief Society, MIA, and Primary—providing the organizational structure.

In the meantime, Mormonism at its center was undergoing a number of changes resulting in the move toward *gesellschaft*. Indeed, with the de-emphasis on the “gathering of the saints” and the success of missionary efforts, Mormonism began to abandon its integral relationship to American culture as it increasingly became one religion among many in other countries with distinct cultures. Hence, a transfiguration of the “auxiliarized church” into the “correlated church,” a profound bureaucratization, which occurred in response to needs for (1) maintaining doctrinal consistency; (2) establishing “unambiguous reporting lines”; (3) creating an “activity program that could be followed by wards, stakes, and branches throughout the church”; (4) reducing the number of meetings and activities expected of members; and (5) stopping the drain on institutional resources and structure occasioned by duplication through auxiliaries (pp. 375-376). Significant implications follow for Mormon identity as “church membership” replaces Mormon ethnicity. In fact, this is the topic of her next book, *Being Mormon*, which will address the tradition since World War II. Her opening chapter will explore “from

peoplehood to church membership” (p.369), a transformation “from simply being Mormon to being Mormon Christians” (p. 30). In her own words, “between 1960 and the end of the century, Mormonism experienced a conversion in which it changed from being an institution and a people embedded in a particular culture to being a church, belief system, and worshiping body able to thrive in many cultures” (p.7).

Shipp's general methodological orientation is more typical of anthropologists and sociologists than historians, and it appears to have emerged out of her experience with religious studies, a brief stint with Kinsey Institute where she did sociological research, and her personal encounter with the Mormon intellectual community via the Mormon History Association. Her move from outsider historian, a position that often provides insight not recognized from the inside but relies too heavily upon secular explanation, to a much more sympathetic position of “inside/outsider” led both Mormons and non-Mormons to admire her work. In fact, she became a principal source for journalists reporting on Mormon phenomena since she could be regarded as disinterested or at least more objective (a word she does not use) than LDS or RLDS scholars or church public relations personnel. Sounding like anthropologists and sociologists whose identification with the people whom they study leads to advocacy as they speak for or present highly sympathetic accounts of the group, Shipp eventually came to perceive her role as an “uncertified calling.” Indeed, it was a “calling” in a profound Mormon sense. Though there was no laying on of hands, she feels a personal responsibility to explain the Mormons and Mormonism to the world. The Mark Hoffman episode provides a

graphic example. Most of the reporters, who were crime specialists, knew little about religion and soon discovered that they could not make sense out of the Hoffman murders. They were unable, as Shipps said, to “speak Mormon,” and her “calling” was to translate. (Note the implications that Mormons remain an ethnic group notwithstanding her general argument.)

I was tempted in the early part of her book to think of myself as an outside/insider, meaning someone who is now outside the tradition as a nonbeliever who can remember what it was like to be a committed insider, but toward the end of the book I discovered her plea to Mormons who study Mormonism to be outside/insiders-- i.e., to adopt a disinterested position in their study of Mormonism. Failure to do so is likely to produce “confessional histories” or apologetics rather than good scholarship. In the end, her methodological orientation is close to the phenomenology of religion, especially as espoused in religious studies, that may be expressed in the language of one of my former teachers, Winston King, as a “detached-withinness.” Such an orientation encourages an understanding of the experience from the perspective(s) of devotees, but it differs from apologetics by its unwillingness to suspend critical analysis. These skills are fine tuned in Jan Shipps’ analysis of Mormonism at each historical juncture. As a collection of articles and papers covering Mormon history from its beginning to the present, the book utilizes Shipps’ skills in sociological methods and her position as insider/outsider to produce genuine insight.

The book is organized in five sections plus the prologue and epilogue. Though there is not sufficient space to discuss the various chapters, I will mention a few particularly

helpful essays for social scientists. The first part focuses on perceptions of others about Mormonism and Mormons about others. “From Satyr to Saint: American Perceptions of the Mormons, 1860-1960” utilizes the skills in sampling that she acquired at the Kinsey Institute to enable a content analysis of the printed material on Mormons throughout this period. Negative images, largely a result of Protestant clergy, persisted throughout the nineteenth century, with some moderation during the first two decades of the twentieth century. But during the Great Depression, when magazines and newspapers perpetuated the myth that the Mormons were not on the public dole because they “take care of their own,” the saints’ image became positive. The post-war period saw the Mormons become a “model minority,” an image reinforced through the sixties and seventies with the national appearance of prominent Latter-day Saints and the contrast between Mormon youth and counter-cultural types. However, the high visibility of Mormonism during the nineties and its establishment as one of the major denominations in America is now eroding the “protection of minority religious status” that the saints have enjoyed (p.112). Seeking to claim their place as a major Christian denomination, “whether they are called Mormons, Latter-day Saints, or Mormon Christians,” they “will have to defend themselves against—or glory in—being a part of a church in which women have no access to the priesthood, a good portion of church leadership adopts an anti-intellectual stance, and some BYU professors will fail to get tenure for religious reasons” (p.114).

As the image of Mormons in the eyes of others began to change, so also did the ways in which Mormons defined those outside their own faith. The long-time practice of identifying non-Mormons as gentiles, while

perceiving themselves as having the “blood of Israel in their veins” was part of the nomenclature that Shipps experienced upon her arrival in Logan. Her review of the *Journal History* of the church revealed that authors critical of Mormonism were labeled gentile while those who tended to be neutral or positive were identified as non-Mormon. An amusing account surfaced when Leonard Arrington’s *Great Basin Kingdom* was catalogued by a librarian as “friendly non-Mormon.” As the “other” became less threatening and the boundaries defining Mormonism more porous, outsiders were increasingly referred to as non-Mormons rather than gentiles. And with the current universalization of the church and the propensity to emphasize the Christian elements of Mormonism, “non-Mormon” apparently is giving way to “non-member” as the preferred label for those outside the church.

Part Two addresses questions of history, historiography, and writing about religious history. Observing that before World War Two historical and “journalistic” accounts of Mormonism were easily classified as anti-Mormon or pro-Mormon, Shipps identifies publications in the forties and fifties—including Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History*, Brooks’ *Mountain Meadows Massacre*, O’Dea’s *The Mormons*, and Arrington’s *Great Basin Kingdom*—that introduced a new brand of scholarship. Indeed, the “new Mormon history,” with phenomena explained by secular as well as religious factors, to which Shipps herself made major contributions, emerged out of this context. Her most interesting chapters address the writing of history, efforts to control the telling of history, and the diverse ways in which different audiences respond to historical accounts. I suspect that she correctly evaluates the First Presidency and

Council of the Twelve’s decision to withhold the invitation for Laurel Thatcher Ulrich to deliver the keynote address at the LDS Relief Society’s Annual Women’s Conference. Church officials probably did not want to provide this highly admired, Pulitzer Prize-winning author with an opportunity to “talk about Mormon women and history from a platform that implied the blessing of the LDS priesthood” (p.194). She suggests that other contexts do not elicit similar efforts at control. However, church officials’ failure to control Mormon scholarship in other contexts may simply follow from their inability to do so. Her essay on the accolades John Brooke’s *Refiner’s Fire* received within academia while it was rejected by several Mormon scholars is worthy of attention because of the opportunity it provides for her to set Brooke’s work in the context of a better understanding of the development of religion in American society. The hermetic tradition described by Brooks profoundly influenced the development of several religions in early America.

“Putting Religion at the Heart of Mormon History and History at the Heart of Mormonism” provides the rubric for the essays in Part Three. Reflections on Christian origins led Shipps to conclude that the “history making that goes on at the genesis of a new religion differs from ordinary history making” in that the former involves the “irruption of the sacred into the profane realm through an event or series of events that are sufficiently anomalous to sustain supernatural explanation. This is the *sine qua non*” (p. 224). A reconstruction of origins obviously will come from both the inside and outside, and it is here that we see a struggle over the control of the past. Three fascinating essays enable Shipps to illustrate that the discernment of the sacred in history

need not be limited to the point of origins. A chapter contrasting LDS conceptions of the restoration with the prevailing notions demonstrates a quite comprehensive integration of Christian and Hebraic elements, along with the Book of Mormon, into a creative theology that appeals to particular religious seekers. Another chapter points to the religious significance and meaning of Brigham Young's leadership to the saints in contrast to the numerous historical accounts attributing Young's success primarily to his remarkable organizational skills and other secular factors.

To me, the most compelling essay in this section is "The Scattering of the Gathering and the Gathering of the Scattered: The Mid-Twentieth-Century Mormon Diaspora."

It is here that Shipps' insight into the dynamics of Mormon development is most apparent. Having demonstrated the role of the "gathering of the saints" in the creation of a Mormon ethnicity through the Nineteenth Century, she proceeds to show how the building of "wardhouses" and chapels, which followed a simple, standardized model, brought Latter-day Saints living outside the Mormon heartland together into cohesive communities. The standardized architecture meant that Mormons and non-Mormons alike would begin to recognize a Mormon presence well beyond traditional Mormon country. Indeed, moving to a new ward would be like coming home, or perhaps never leaving. The symbolic function of building these chapels was the "creation of mini-Zions" throughout the land (p. 269). The chapel became the focal point for a continuous ritual re-enactment of the "gathering" and Mormons were constantly "planning a meeting, going to a meeting, sitting in a meeting, or coming from a meeting"—in

short, using their chapels day and night, virtually seven days a week. Today, however, with attenuated schedules and the reality of a correlated church moving toward "church membership," Mormonism confronts the possibility, it seems to me, of becoming a Sunday religion in contrast with a way of life.

I found the essays in Part Four—"Deciphering, Explicating, Clarifying: Exercising an Insider-Outsider's Informal Calling"—the least enlightening, though the introduction was helpful. Her use of "layering" to explain Joseph Smith's theological development, which simply presents ideas in their chronological sequence, will not surprise nor necessarily inform anyone familiar with fundamental ideas in Mormon theology. The second chapter in this section will be of greater interest. Originally written for a collection on minority religions in relationship to the American mainstream, it presents the conflict between Protestants and Mormons over polygamy and treats the Manifesto as the foundation for the subsequent growth and universalization of the church. Thus, it is "supremely ironic" that Protestants, who were largely responsible for the Manifesto, should play such a crucial role in the "current success of Mormonism" (p. 311). When looking at Mormon origins with Joseph Smith, she notes that what separated Mormons from other sectarians making similar claims about restoration was the Book of Mormon. Further differences emerged with a more radical conception of the restoration linking Christian and Hebraic elements, as noted earlier in this review, that would justify the "restoration of all things" including plural marriage. Moreover, the saints stopped thinking of themselves as Biblical gentiles and began thinking of themselves as "literal descendants of the

Israelites” (p. 315). Both the invitation to “gather the saints” and external persecution heightened the boundary between the Mormons and others, particularly those who subsequently followed Brigham Young west.

The final section, Part Five, contains two essays under the guise of how her mind was changed and her understanding amplified. The first, reprinted from BYU Studies but with important revisions, addresses the persistent question of Mormonism’s relationship to Christianity. Rejecting traditional sociological categories of sect, cult, church, and denomination, Shippo prefers to identify Mormonism as a religious tradition. She clarifies the argument from her previous book, correcting interpretations asserting that Mormonism had stopped being Christian or that she was distancing Mormonism from Christianity. On the contrary, she has long held that “Mormonism is a legitimate way of being Christian” (p. 331) though not her way. In fact, her encounter with Mormonism, especially her engaged scholarship and inclusion within the intellectual community, has enriched her own experience as a Methodist Christian. The second essay on “Knowledge and Understanding” is written in honor of her friend, Lavina Fielding Anderson, as a result of Anderson’s excommunication. Recounting Shippo’s invitation to participate as “one of five lay ministers” in a Methodist worldwide communion service the Sunday following the excommunication, she describes her preoccupation with Anderson, feeling the pain of her sister who was severed from the church she so loved. For the first time in her life, Shippo understood, rather than simply having had knowledge of, that “proxy business” in Mormonism. Jan Shippo had taken communion for Lavina Fielding

Anderson.

This is a book well worth reading. In fact, for those familiar with Thomas O’Dea’s *The Mormons* and Armand Mauss’ *The Angel and the Beehive*, Jan Shippo’s book will provide a context for understanding an important linkage, or another way of viewing the relationship, between these two volumes. While O’Dea examined the tribal culture and auxiliary institution of the Mormonism that Shippo found in Logan, Mauss, in spite of his retrenchment hypothesis, analyzed the Mormonism emerging from its transformation into a bureaucratized, correlated church which is in the process of separating itself from American culture while preparing for denominational status, worldwide acceptance, and “church membership.”

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### **Message from the Incoming MSSA President**

The 2002 RRA/SSSR meetings in Salt Lake City offer the Mormon Social Science Association opportunities we would do well to explore as imaginatively as we are able. The 2002 meetings will be an opportunity to highlight the MSSA to several of our constituencies: scholars interested in Mormonism; local/regional scholars who will participate in the meetings because they are in Salt but who otherwise would not; and students. When we meet in Ohio we will need to do some concrete planning. What follows are some ideas I suggest we consider:

We should do all we can to encourage participation both in the meetings and in our

association. I am particularly hopeful of attracting student participation. I often find student papers to be the most imaginative, passionate and memorable. And it is a great opportunity for professional socialization. Perhaps we could sponsor a student paper session. Regardless of whether students present papers, I hope we can effectively encourage their attendance and that we can recruit more into the MSSA.

Cultivating student membership in the MSSA is an important way to expand our reach and to encourage scholarship on Mormonism. We should consider ways that we can help serve student needs. Certainly we are priced right. One way would be to include student contributions to the Newsletter. We could even publish student papers, perhaps through a student competition. There are certainly other ways to make the Association student-friendly.

The MSSA focuses on scholarship, yet many of us are teachers as well as scholars. Pedagogical sharing could broaden our effectiveness. This could include: syllabi of courses or units on religion and Mormonism; successful ways to use books, articles, and other media in teaching; and various and sundry other practical ideas.

The 2002 meetings will be time for our bi-annual Vernon Lecture. We should think of ways to invite a wide audience to this lecture.

Daryl White

### **Announcements**

The 2002 joint SSSR/RRA meetings will be held Oct. 31 to Nov. 3 at the Doubletree Hotel in Salt Lake City. SSSR's main topic is religious practice (traditional and

emerging forms, kinds of social space in which religious practices thrive, how it varies across groups, how it affects power relations or brings about change). RRA's focus is theory and applied research. The site for 2003 meetings is Norfolk, Virginia.

A new journal is being initiated in 2002, Journal of Media and Religion. It will be edited by Daniel Stout (BYU) and Judith Buddenbaum (CSU). It will address the broad question of how religion as a social and cultural phenomenon broadens understanding of mass communication in society. More information is available through links at [www.erlbaum.com](http://www.erlbaum.com).

Marcus Martins, an associate professor of religion at BYU-Hawaii, has been using the television to spread his message of the qualities necessary for church service. A lecture titled "Magnifying Callings: A Matter of Faith, Hope, Love, and Perfection" was recently broadcast on Olelo Community Television, a nonprofit station in Honolulu, Hawaii. Previously, a lecture on technological perspectives on church growth in the 21st century was broadcast on BYU-TV.

Annual MSSA dues are \$5.00 per year. The year through which your dues are paid is indicated on the mailing label. If your mailing label is printed with 2000 or earlier, you are not current, and we invite you to become current by sending a check to MSSA. If you do not wish to be a member of MSSA, please notify Cardell Jacobson, MSSA Secretary/Treasurer, Department of Sociology, 800 SWKT, BYU, Provo, UT 84602. Additional donations are always welcome, particularly those given in support of the Vernon Lecture. Thank you for your support.