

# MORMON SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION

## NEWSLETTER

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Mary Lou McNamara, Editor

Perry Cunningham, Designer

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### President's Message

I'm not too certain what a "President's Message" is supposed to contain. Perhaps like all of you, over the years I've read some and skipped some. I guess the most direct message I have is, "Read this newsletter!" But then you don't need me to direct your eyes to the information below. So let me add, "Share it with your colleagues and students."

At our last meeting in Columbus, Ohio, the MSSA sponsored two sessions: an author-meets-critics session of the Shepherd brothers' book, *Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle*; and a session addressing contemporary Mormonism entitled, "Mormons at the Millenium." In my perusal of the program I found only one paper on Mormonism outside MSSA sessions, Marcus Martins' paper, "No More Circled Wagons: Trends in Contemporary Mormonism." In addition, many MSSA members participated in other sessions on a variety of topics and in many capacities.

For our next meeting, MSSA submitted two sessions to the 2002 SSSR meetings in Salt Lake City: one is our biennial Glenn M. Vernon Lecture to be delivered by Marie Cornwall; the other will be a session honoring the distinguished career of Armand Mauss. In addition to these two sessions sponsored by MSSA, I am aware of one other session of

interest submitted by David Knowlton on minority religion in Utah. See details on all three sessions below.

I want to thank everyone who works to make MSSA possible. Since I don't relish the idea of walking the plank, I won't name names. Suffice it to mention, there are many people who do all sorts of things, like design brochures, contribute to and put our newsletter together, keep our records, offer good advice, and who participate in lots of other ways—often with no professional reward. Special thanks to one person I will mention by name: Michael Nielsen, our past president, has done a lot over the years to help the MSSA along—and he continues to provide helpful direction unselfishly.

Daryl White

### Errata

The Fall 2001 MSSA newsletter included an excellent review of Jan Shipps' book, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years Among the Mormons*. Regrettably, it was attributed erroneously to Daryl White. However, it was written by O. Kendall White, Jr. I apologize for this unfortunate error.—  
Editor

### A Social Science Class on the Family Proclamation at BYU

Alan J. Hawkins

Brigham Young University exists to integrate the secular and sacred in the process of higher learning. Fall semester 2000, I helped to initiate a new course in the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University: "Strengthening Marriage and Family:

Proclamation Principles and Scholarship." The word "proclamation" in that title refers to the "The Family: A Proclamation to the World," by the First Presidency and the Council of the Twelve Apostles of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This course explores the doctrines and principles articulated in the Proclamation to give students a foundation for building and maintaining strong marriages and families in their personal lives and reaching out in their communities to strengthen families. The course investigates more than two dozen important topics related to family life, drawing upon scripture, prophetic word, and scholarly research. The course integrates sacred and secular sources, showing that the principles of strong marriages and families that Latter-day Saints and Christians generally espouse are well supported by family research. And the language of scholarship that is woven with faith gives students greater confidence to share and defend these principles in non-religious settings.

The primary text for the course is a volume titled, *Strengthening Our Families: An In-depth Look at the Proclamation on the Family*, edited by my friend and colleague, David Dollahite, and published by Deseret Book. Professor Dollahite pulled together the contribution of 100 LDS family scholars to produce this 400-page volume that has no pictures, photographs, or even figures. But unlike most introductory textbooks, students rate the text very highly and less than 10 percent sell back the \$40 book at the end of the semester. Demand for the class exceeds our resources to teach it. More than half of the students in the course are majors from outside the School of Family Life; for many of them, this will be their only university instruction on marriage and family. Faculty from six different disciplines teach the course.

Integrating the sacred and secular into our teaching at BYU is common. However, this Proclamation course, as we often refer to it, still may be unique. President Boyd K. Packer, who dedicated the School of Family Life in 1998, asked faculty to accept the Proclamation as its charter. Thus, there is an apostolic charge to use a specific religious document to guide all

that we do in the School. As we teach (and research) about family life, faculty have a specific, 609-word document to guide them. If BYU is a "continuing experiment on a great premise that a large and complex university can be first class academically while nurturing an environment of faith in God and the practice of Christian virtues," as President Hinckley once said, I know of no other unit on campus with as much specificity and detail about how to conduct that experiment (Hinckley, Gordon B. "Trust and Accountability." Brigham Young University, 1992-93 *Devotional and Fireside Speeches*. Provo, Utah: University Publications, 1993, p. 22).

In my teaching, I do not find this close-knit relationship with the Proclamation constraining or unhealthy. Instead, I usually find it productive for learning. For instance, when I can access students' faith about the divine origins and potential of all human beings beautifully articulated in the Proclamation, it is easier for me to communicate with them at a deeper level about the tragedy of abuse in families. Even when Proclamation principles seem to diverge somewhat from current research, I find having large doses of both faith and reason in the air to be a stimulating learning environment. For instance, in many ways contemporary research plays down the significance of gender as a critical organizing construct in family life. Juxtaposing this body of academic literature against the central importance of gender in family life articulated in the Proclamation pushes students to think deeper about what gender is and is not, and that's fruitful. I think most students eliminate some of the superficial ideas about gender that are prominent in American and Mormon culture and center their understanding of gender at a deeper level of divine responsibilities. Later, when we talk about how fathers and mothers are "obligated to help one another as equal partners" the students appreciate how the research reinforces something they believe strongly. But their faith also commonly leads them to critique the way social scientists usually operationalize gender equality in their research and the implications they draw from their findings. Hence, their religious faith stimulates rather than blocks the

critical thinking skills that we hope all students develop so they can become more effective consumers and producers of family research and practice.

Perhaps another unique feature of this course is that it is the introductory class for students majoring in the family science and human development disciplines. The extent to which sacred and secular sources are integrated at the beginning of a disciplinary course of study may be unique. From the start of their studies, then, students organize their knowledge about family life around a framework of religious doctrines and principles contained in one of the Church's rare proclamations written by those they sustain as prophets, seers, and revelators. Moreover, subsequent courses in the major usually locate themselves in reference to various parts of the Proclamation. Thus, while students learn the secular research and practice of family science and human development, the religious roots of what they are learning are perhaps closer and more tangible than they are for students in other disciplines. And again, because there is considerable harmony between sacred principles and secular research, I find the religious tones in the class energize learning.

I occasionally hear colleagues inquire as to the need for the Proclamation; there really isn't much of anything new in it. I heard a member of the Council of the Twelve at a meeting on campus confirm that the Proclamation really does not break much new ground, although he stated that the doctrine of the eternal nature and purpose of gender had not been as clearly articulated before. If it doesn't break new ground, however, it is still a wonderful foundation for teaching young adults. At least that has been my experience. A reading of the Proclamation on the first and last days of the semester frames the course. On the first day, I suggest to my students that they will find rich, hidden treasures in the familiar words of the Proclamation as we explore it in-depth over the course of the semester. I test that suggestion the last class period of the semester by re-reading it line by line and inviting students to share their new-found treasures. I haven't been disappointed yet. Some of my most

memorable teaching moments have come in the last two years as I have listened to their spontaneous, heartfelt commentary. Their comments are regularly spiced with the kind of insight I would hope to see in students learning the discipline at any university. And the spiritual understanding is impressive, as well. As a result, it is clearer to me how these principles of strong family life will be proclaimed to the world.

Alan Hawkins is a professor in and associate director of the School of Family Life at Brigham Young University. He received his Ph.D. in human development and family studies at The Pennsylvania State University in 1990. His research has focused on fathering as a context for men's development. Currently, he is conducting research on social policy to strengthen marriage, and identifying new educational infrastructures for promoting strong marriages, especially during the transition to parenthood.

### **Columbus Highlights**

The Fall 2001 SSSR/RRA and MSSA meetings yielded several papers and sessions of interest to scholars of Mormonism. Marcus Martins presented "No More Circled Wagons: Trends in Contemporary Mormonism." He argued that in the last years of the twentieth century the Church shifted rhetoric: (a) from kingdom-building to citizenship and service; (b) from concealment and silence to openness to the media; (c) from antipathy toward other religions to acknowledgement of others' legitimacy and overt attempts to collaborate; and (d) from unofficial political conservatism to an open defense of plurality. The Church also has given concrete signs of strengthening ethnic and women's participation in its high councils.

In "Author Meets Critics: *Mormon Passage: A Missionary Chronicle*, by Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd" this book was reviewed by two non-LDS scholars, Margaret Poloma and Michael Donahue, as well as an LDS scholar, Matt Bahr. Margaret is a sociologist at the University of Akron who, among other things, has written on the Assemblies of God and their explosive worldwide growth; Michael is a psychologist who became well acquainted with

the LDS missionary training program as a post-doc student at BYU; and Matt, a former LDS missionary to Japan with a sociology Ph.D. from Purdue University, is affiliated with the American Religion Data Archive.

Matt provided an insider's perspective on the vicissitudes of LDS missionary work and concluded that the primary strength of the book was its authentic, descriptive detail. At the same time he wondered how generalizable the accounts of missionary activity in 1960s Mexico were to current LDS missionary experience and to what extent the Shepherds' extensive correspondence with one another in the same time and place shaped and reinforced their particular slant as young missionaries (occasionally critical of individuals but uncritically accepting of the program). Michael entertained the session audience with anecdotes of his post-doc residential experience at BYU, described the book as an enlightening case study of Mormon culture for non-Mormons, and only complained about the introductory "Durko-babble" which always annoys him when reading sociological treatises. In contrast, Margaret thought a weakness of the book was an *insufficiency* of theoretical analysis. She also confessed that she had a very angry first reaction to reading the journal narratives of youthful missionaries during the turbulent 1960s because of their apparent acquiescence at that time to the institutional racism, sexism, and authoritarianism of the LDS Church. The book's last chapter on current issues facing the church mollified her somewhat.

"Mormons at the Millenium" was the theme of a session held early Sunday morning at the conference. The session profiled several aspects of Latter-day Saint life. Ray Merrill and Stephen Bahr presented research on health among LDS church members; Cardell Jacobson discussed Mormon religiosity; Stephen Bahr discussed his research comparing Mormons and non-Mormons on crime victimization and drug use; and John Hoffman addressed LDS life in Japan. Michael Nielsen served as organizer and convener for the session.

In addition, MSSA board member John Hoffman convened a session titled "Religion and Physical Health." None of the papers in that session were on Mormons specifically.

### **Business Meeting Minutes**

The MSSA business meeting was attended by board members John Hoffmann, Cardell Jacobson, Mary Lou McNamara, Michael Nielson, Lynn Payne, Gordon Shepherd, Daryl White, and Grant Underwood plus the following MSSA members or prospective members: Marie Cornwall, Perry Cunningham, Matt Evans, Tim Heaton, Marcus Martins, Gary Shepherd, and Kendall White.

1. Several ways to increase interest in MSSA were discussed, including distributing brochures to members of the Mormon History Association and Dialogue subscribers, putting newsletters and membership information online, and sending brochures to the Behavioral Science department at Utah Valley State College.
2. Nominations will be made at the Fall 2002 meeting for new board members, with election in Spring of 2003.
3. A suggestion was made to review Douglas Davies' book, *The Mormon Culture of Salvation*, in a forthcoming newsletter. Also, it would be good to include some Mormon Studies syllabi.
4. A suggestion was made to try to generate an email list with the next newsletter.
5. Several session possibilities for the next MSSA meetings in conjunction with the SSSR/RRA meetings were discussed, plus nominees for the Vernon lecture.
6. Financial information was discussed and approved.

Cardell Jacobson, Secretary/Treasurer

### **Plans for Salt Lake**

The next meeting of the MSSA will be during the SSSR/RRA annual meetings, October 31-November 3, 2002 at the Doubletree Hotel. The SSSR theme is "Practicing Religion in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century." The RRA theme is "Theory and Applied Research."

The Glenn M. Vernon Lecture sponsored by the MSSA will be convened by Daryl White, Spelman College, [dwhite@spelman.edu](mailto:dwhite@spelman.edu). The lecture, tentatively titled "Gender and Religion in Comparative Perspective: In Search of a Paradigm," will be given by Marie Cornwall, BYU, [marie\\_cornwall@byu.edu](mailto:marie_cornwall@byu.edu).

A MSSA session titled "Contributions of Armand L. Mauss to Mormon and Other Religious Studies" will be convened by O. Kendall White, Jr., Washington and Lee University, [whitek@wlu.edu](mailto:whitek@wlu.edu). Panelists will include Charles Y. Glock, *emeritus*, University of California, Berkeley, [cyg@netw.com](mailto:cyg@netw.com); Gary Shepherd, Oakland University, [shepherd@oakland.edu](mailto:shepherd@oakland.edu); and Thomas Murphy, Edmonds Community College, Washington, [tmurphy@edcc.edu](mailto:tmurphy@edcc.edu). Armand L. Mauss, *emeritus*, WSU, will respond.

A MSSA session titled, "Diversity in the Mormon Homeland: Minority Religion in Utah" will be convened by David Clark Knowlton, University of Utah, [david.knowlton@anthro.utah.edu](mailto:david.knowlton@anthro.utah.edu). The panelists will include Janet Bennion, Utah Valley State College, [bennioja@uvsc.edu](mailto:bennioja@uvsc.edu), *Kava, Khrisna, and Kinki: An Exploration of Minority Religions in Utah*; Bonnie Lynn Mitchell-Green, Southern Utah University, [mitchellgreen@suu.edu](mailto:mitchellgreen@suu.edu), *Mixing Sacred and Profane: "New Thought" in Southern Utah*; Bonnie Glass-Coffin, Utah State University, [glasscob@cc.usu.edu](mailto:glasscob@cc.usu.edu), *Shamanism as New Age Healing: The "Pros," and "Cons" and the Cautions*; and Richley H. Crapo, Utah State University, [rcrapo@cc.usu.edu](mailto:rcrapo@cc.usu.edu), *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Spirituality in Mormonism*.

## Announcements

- The MSSA website is working and is available at <http://www2.gasou.edu/psychology/mssa/>. Mike Nielsen is maintaining it. It is still rather basic; he hopes it will become increasingly useful over time.
- Are you teaching Mormon studies-related classes? Send a copy of your syllabus to Mike Nielsen for inclusion on the MSSA website. Send it to him by email, [mnielsen@gasou.edu](mailto:mnielsen@gasou.edu), or by regular mail, Dept. of Psychology, Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA 30460-8041
- The University of Illinois Press book, *Mormon History*, by Ronald W. Walker, David J. Whittaker, and James B. Allen, with a contribution by Armand Mauss, is free online at the University of Illinois Press site: [www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/walker/toc.html](http://www.press.uillinois.edu/epub/books/walker/toc.html).
- The Salt Lake Tribune's coverage of three studies on Mormonism presented at the November 2001 American Anthropology Association is available at [www.sltrib.com](http://www.sltrib.com). Select "Archives" and search for the title of Christopher Smith's December 1 article, "Nation's Anthropologists Evaluate LDS Culture." (The article precipitated some criticism for biased coverage.)
- The 1<sup>st</sup> U.S. Conference on Children's Spirituality will be held October 4-6. It is sponsored by ChildSpirit Institute and the Department of Psychology at the State University of West Georgia. For more information visit [www.Childspirit.net](http://www.Childspirit.net).
- The Department of Sociology and the Population Research Center are seeking a postdoctoral fellow with research interests in the social scientific study of religion (e.g., role of religion and spirituality in health and/or family life). The appointment will be for two years beginning in September,

2002. Contact Christopher Ellison,  
[cellison@mail.la.utexas.edu](mailto:cellison@mail.la.utexas.edu).

· Annual MSSA dues are \$5. The year through which your dues are paid is indicated on the mailing label. If your mailing label is printed with 2001 or earlier, you are not current. You can become current by sending a check to MSSA to Cardell Jacobson, MSSA Secretary/Treasurer, Department of Sociology, 800 SWKT, BYU, Provo, UT 84602. If you do not wish to be a member of MSSA, please send that notification. Additional donations are always welcome, particularly those given in support of the Vernon lecture.