



# Mormon Social Sciences Association

*...bringing social science to Mormonism*

Spring 2010 Newsletter, Volume 30, Issue 1

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## *Meet*



MSSA President Ryan Cragun

## President's Message

Greetings!

It's an honor to be writing to everyone for the first time as President of the MSSA. There is a lot happening at the moment, so let me get right to it. One of the most exciting bits of news concerns the Glenn M. Vernon biennial lecture. At the 2009 Business Meeting we voted to invite Douglas Davies to give the lecture. I contacted Dr. Davies shortly after the meeting and he has agreed to give the 2010 Glenn M. Vernon lecture! While there are still a few details to work out on the arrangements, we are very excited to have Dr. Davies join us at the SSSR/MSSA meetings.

Also on the annual meeting front... Assuming they are all accepted, we will have somewhere around six sessions sponsored or co-sponsored by the MSSA, in addition to the Glenn M. Vernon lecture. Four of these sessions were organized by David Knowlton - a panel or two on Davies's "The Mormon Culture of Salvation", which fits perfectly with the fact that Dr. Davies will be at the conference, a panel on left-wing Mormon activism, a panel on Utah County and its role as a breeding ground for Mormon social organization, and possibly three sessions on Mormonism and homosexuality, including Mormon involvement in Proposition 8. I'm excited by these sessions and hope they are all accepted for the program (I'm sure which sessions are accepted will be noted in the September issue of the Newsletter).

Just so everyone is aware, the annual meeting of the MSSA will be on Saturday around noon. We will arrange to have food at the meeting so you don't have to feel rushed to get lunch between sessions (probably pizza again). The meeting used to be on Fridays around noon, but the new awards luncheon has usurped our spot. I checked with Art Farnsley, the Executive Secretary of SSSR, and the meeting is already on the session program. However, do note that the meeting is going to be called something different this year. Traditionally, in the past, it has been called the "MSSA Business Meeting." Apparently calling it a "business meeting" was scaring away young scholars interested in Mormonism as they thought we were talking about really serious issues in the meeting and not just getting to know other scholars interested in Mormonism while chowing down on pizza. So, if you have any suggestions for a more inviting sounding phrase we can use rather than "business meeting," please forward them to me.

## MSSA Website

[www.mormonsocialscience.org](http://www.mormonsocialscience.org)

### FEATURES:

- Bibliography
- Contact information
- Information on MSSA meetings and sessions
- "Ask An Expert" archives
- Pay dues online
- News and announcements
- Job opportunities
- Links to other academic journals and organizations
- And more!

### PREVIOUS "ASK AN EXPERT" TOPICS:

- African American women within the LDS Church
- Relationship between the LDS Church, Native Americans, and Central/South Americans
- Mormon myth and sacred narrative
- The sociology of conversion
- LDS missionaries and missions
- Mormon participation in the Civil War

## President's Message continued:

The last thing I want to discuss is the MSSA website. You may have received my email a few months back noting that I switched the website to new software. The new software is simpler to use on the backend and has a number of features that make it more attractive than the last software I was using. One of those features is the ability to restrict content to members of the MSSA. At the moment, the only content that is being restricted is conference presentations. This is a new feature on the site that I hope to expand over the next few years. I will be making the rounds at the annual meeting asking people presenting on Mormonism if I can post a copy of their presentation/paper on the website, but only for other members of the MSSA to see. This will allow for a greater dialog between MSSA members and will also allow those who cannot attend the meeting a chance to see what work is being done. If you haven't contacted me already to set up an account on the website, please do. It only takes me a second and you will have access to all the website features.

One of the other features of the website that has received a lot of positive feedback is the "ask an expert" section. To date we have fielded 21 "ask an expert" questions (a list is available here: <http://www.mormonsocialscience.org/ask-an-expert/>). The responses I receive when sending out the questions are always of high caliber and reflect the varied interests of the membership of the MSSA. It is also very gratifying to be thanked profusely by those submitting the questions when they receive well-written and well-researched answers to their questions by the leading experts in the field. For instance, the latest "ask an expert" question asked about research on the relationship between Mormonism and Native Americans. Within a couple of days I received a number of excellent responses with a list of readings for the person who submitted the question that could no doubt keep him busy for years. Of note, the recommended readings included a substantial number by current members of the MSSA, but also included a broad range, both in date and discipline. Here is the response from the person asking the question, "That was incredibly helpful, Dr. Cragun. Be sure to thank those experts for their thoughtful responses--I was especially thrilled to see that Mauss and Shipps responded! You can let Mauss know that his book is what piqued my interest in the subject to begin with." In short, the body of knowledge held by members of the MSSA is nothing short of astonishing and your willingness to share that knowledge with random strangers on the internet is laudable.

In summation, the social scientific study of Mormonism is very much alive and well. While our numbers may remain small, we are quite active and are serving as an excellent resource for interested parties. We also have big things ahead this year, with a renowned international scholar coming to speak at our annual meeting and a number of sessions on Mormonism. These are exciting times!

Best,

Ryan T. Cragun  
MSSA President

## MSSA Leadership

### President

Ryan T. Cragun  
(2009-2011)

### President-Elect

Henri Gooren  
(2011-2013)

### Board Members

Melvyn Hammarberg

Matt Bahr

Rick Phillips

(2009-2011)

### Treasurer/Secretary

Michael McBride

(2007-present)

### Newsletter Co-Editors

Bosco Bae

Rene Romig

(2009-present)

## Message from Your Co-Editors

**BOSCO BAE** (boscoocsob@gmail.com) is a senior studying anthropology at the University of Utah. He has previously obtained his B.A. in philosophy and psychology at Boston University and an M.A. in philosophy at the University of Amsterdam. His current research interests lie at the intersection of these disciplines in the areas of self, religion, morality, and law.

**RENE ROMIG** (reneromig@gmail.com) holds a B.A. in sociology from Rice University and has interests in Mormon history, sociology, museum studies, and Spanish.

### Bosco writes:

I would like to thank the Mormon Social Science Association for the nomination and opportunity to be an editor for the newsletter. It is an honor and a privilege to serve the academic community in this capacity. I look forward to working with Rene in presenting an extensive newsletter to the community and engaging a broad audience in the social science arena. Not only do we aim to look at various disciplines and their approach to the study of Mormonism but also to provide a space for the engagement of interdisciplinary dialogue. The newsletter will continue to present upcoming publications and conferences as well as other features. We request the cooperation of the MSSA members in providing opinions and assisting us with gathering and sharing information regarding upcoming events, publications, scholarships, grants, fellowships, and job opportunities. We are also introducing a new section that features a creative piece from an artist. We believe that this will not only provide a refreshing break in the newsletter but also offer a different qualitative dimension into the study of Mormonism. We look forward to working with all current and future members of the MSSA community in developing the newsletter.

### Rene writes:

When I was a sociology student at Rice University, back before I had even taken one statistics course, I stumbled my way into meeting Ryan Cragun and getting to know the great organization that is the MSSA. Ryan not only introduced me to the Association, but he took the time to help me transform a statistically weak independent project I'd been fiddling with into a full-fledged article—complete with graphs—that was later published in the MSSA newsletter. He was a great source of support for me, a student just starting off on her journey and looking for a way to combine interests in both sociology and Mormonism. Now, I'm part of the editing team for this newsletter, and I'm honored to take on the responsibility. I hope that Bosco and I can use this newsletter to help point other students of social sciences (both young and old) towards the MSSA and share with them just how great of a resource they have at their fingertips. For those already involved with the MSSA, our goal is to provide you with a newsletter that will compliment your enthusiastic participation and generous support. Please don't hesitate to send us your comments and suggestions for the next issue!

## Obedience, Aspiration, and Duty

*Ponder*

BY BOSCO BAE

In its February 2010 issue, National Geographic magazine ran an article entitled "The Polygamists" that focused on the FLDS group led by Warren Jeffs. The article raised many questions and issues that seem particularly suited to a social scientific analysis. Given the recent flood of media attention and scholarly work on this topic, we felt it appropriate to include a piece on this article for the consideration of our MSSA readers. Here, co-editor Bosco Bae provides a commentary on the article that incorporates philosophy, ethics, and other disciplines.

After reading Scott Anderson's article, "The Polygamists" from the 2010 February issue of National Geographic, I was particularly fascinated with the juxtaposition between Scott Anderson's personal experience of the Fundamental Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (FLDS) community and with what he understood about FLDS history and their involvement in the news. Scott Anderson presents a contrast in the values represented through members with the values represented in the media and law. From a social science perspective, the juxtaposition highlights a tension in value systems – conflicting senses of morality.

Recently I was introduced to a dialectic in the morality of law – the morality of aspiration and the morality of duty. The morality of aspiration, I was explained, is much like what the Ancient Greeks called the "Good Life." And of course there are variations on what the "Good Life" would be: America declared it as our "unalienable right to Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness." For society, this is the morality of aspiration in law. The law stands to enable the individual with

those rights to pursue happiness. The morality of duty is the basic rules of civility society must preserve to maintain order and function. Most commonly, it has come in the form of "thou shalt not," steal, murder, and so on; the bottom-up approach I'm told. Eventually, these two forms of morality overlap when what one aspires to conflicts with what one isn't allowed to do. In other words, tensions manifest at the phenomenological level of one's own ambitions of happiness and one's relation to societal duties and conventions.

With regard to the FLDS community, via media, the moralities of duty and aspiration have come together in law enforcement, manifesting in raids, indictments, and convictions as well as their ensuing sentences in court – not only for the case of Warren Jeffs, and other members charged with forms of sexual abuse, but also for the community and their judicial consequences e.g. land, custody of children, and so on. The media and the judicial sentences strike a dissonant chord of disgust when we hear the charges of 'rape as an accomplice' and 'sexual assault.' Presumably this falls under the morality of duty aspect of law which preserves a right in the morality of aspiration; the enforcement of one for the preservation of the other.

In contrast, the morality of aspiration and duty takes on a different tone with the FLDS. Rather than an emphasis on an individual level of value in aspiration the emphasis is communal. The opening scene of "several thousand" members in gathering to mourn the death of a wife and show support for the family; "old fashioned devotion and neighborly cooperation" where even the children help bring in the

### MSSA Dues

Please send your dues for 2010 to:

Michael McBride  
7 Frost Street  
Irvine, CA 92617

Dues are \$10.00 annually. Checks should be made payable to "Mormon Social Science Association" or "MSSA."

Dues are also payable on the MSSA website via Paypal (which accepts credit cards).

If you would like to receive this newsletter by email, and don't already, save the MSSA some money by sending your email address to: mcbride@uci.edu

## More about MSSA

The Mormon Social Science Association (MSSA) exists for the purpose of promoting and sharing the scholarly study of Mormon life. Any person with an interest in the study of the social, cultural, or religious life of Mormons is eligible to join. MSSA provides contact and associations among researchers and educators working in both academic and applied settings. It is interdisciplinary and international in scope and purpose. The association participates in annual joint meetings of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and the Religious Research Association (RRA). MSSA also publishes and distributes a semi-annual newsletter to its members.

For additional information, contact:

Mormon Social Science  
Association, c/o Michael  
McBride  
7 Frost Street  
Irvine, CA 92617  
mcbride@uci.edu

Visit us online at:

[www.mormonsocialscience.org](http://www.mormonsocialscience.org)

## Commentary continued:

yield; where a sister shares her husband for her sister's "happiness," all of which has been centered around the motif of plural marriage "to build up the Kingdom of God." Women are given the task to "build up the celestial family" that will continue for eternity." In this sense, the morality of aspiration is centered on theological grounds for the afterlife reflecting a social governance centered upon the "law of plural marriage," family, and community; the theological fueling the social. It is this morality of aspiration joined with the morality of duty that creates a dynamic tension within and between individuals, social networks, and overall governance.

As some of the women in the article have indicated, the concept of obedience has strained that sense of aspiration as it interjects into their embodied conceptual organization of what they are aspiring towards. Dorothy Jessop states, "to be honest [...] I think a lot of women have a hard time with it, because it's not an easy thing to share the man you love. But I came to realize this is another test that God places before you—the sin of jealousy, of pride—and that to be a godly woman, I needed to overcome it." In the cases of "reassignment, Warren Jeffs accounts, via Scott Anderson, that "One of his brother's wives had difficulty accepting the news and could barely bring herself to kiss her new husband. She showed a great spirit of resistance, yet she went through with it," Jeffs records. "She needs to learn to submit to Priesthood." Similarly, Scott Anderson portrays a "wary" Melinda Jeffs - who presents a "stout defense" of Warren Jeffs confidently stating, "that [reassignment] wouldn't happen," as she ponders her obedience if her "reassignment" were to occur.

At the same time, we have Joyce Broadbent:

"from my experience, sister wives usually get along very well. Oh sure, you might be closer to one than another, or someone might get on your nerves occasionally, but that's true in any family. I've never felt any rivalry or jealousy at all." Scott Anderson indicates that the division of household duties (schoolteacher, kitchen, sewing, etc) and an awareness of their role "to bear and raise as many children as possible, to build up the "celestial family" that will remain together for eternity" helps mitigate the tensions of jealousy and allows sorority.

The approach and associated values within the moralities of duty and aspiration - beginning on theoretical, metaphysical, or in this case, theological grounds - are instilled within the social ethos of any network, community, or state. And yet, the social ethos of an individual, or even community, cannot be assumed to manifest a one to one relation. The moralities as they are conceived do not come to being in the same ethos for every individual; automaton cannot be assumed. But rather, the moralities manifest through a hermeneutics and social understanding of the paradigm in which those moralities are grounded. This would of course vary for each individual adhering to that paradigm. In turn, that cognitive and conceptual organization comes into consideration during the assessment, and emotional response, of social situations or circumstances individuals are placed in.

The FLDS members are submersed in a dynamic tension of theological aspiration (family and eternity) and a morality of duty enforced in the power of governance to perpetuate a social structure surrounding that morality of aspiration. This would seem to have given rise to an internal

MSSA @ SSSR 2009

Denver, Colorado

As always, MSSA made its own appearance at the SSSR annual conference, with several papers presented by MSSA members.

A sampling of paper titles:

"Mormons in the ARIS: What Can State Level Data Tell us About Mormons?" by Ryan T. Cragun and Rick Phillips

"Where Have All the Young People Gone? An Insider's View on LDS Conversion" by Richard Stamps

"The Role of Relationships in the Conversion Process: An LDS Sample" by James Phillips and Kristin Hansen

For a complete list of sessions, see the Fall 2009 MSSA newsletter

or

<http://sssrweb.org/PastPrograms.cfm> for the entire conference

## Commentary continued:

dissonance in the conceptualization of obedience. Not only is there obedience to one's personal metaphysical understanding of self in relation to his/her understanding of God in aspiring/duty to reach that celestial state. There is also an obedience grounded in a relation to community, personal household included, guided by revelations of a prophet. The tension lies in an embodied semiotic and hermeneutic of 'obedience' regarding aspiration and duty as they relate to community and afterlife.

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## Artistic Corner

Your editors see the Artistic Corner as an opportunity to feature a creative response to the very same issues that MSSA members often analyze through articles, papers, or books. We hope to include a poem, creative writing piece or artwork in each issue of the newsletter. For this inaugural Artistic Corner, we include the poem "Hat Trick" by Matt Kulisch.

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**ABOUT THE POET:** Matt Kulisch is a 27-year-old poet at the University of Utah. He is an English major studying poetry and classical Greek. He plans to earn both an MFA and a PhD eventually. During his undergraduate career, he has focused on faith as it intersects with poetry. He states, "the study of faith and religion has continually delighted and interested me." Matt is no longer a member of the LDS church but continues to support his family and receive support from them. Not only has poetry informed him but it has also given rise to "mythic wrestlings about symbolism and meaning-making, begging additional questions concerning the access and authority to disseminate truth."

When asked about his poetry and aims:

"I will simply say that I seek: to stop writing for an audience and respond to what the poem demands of me & to find little places--slippages, breaks, playfulness--where unexpectedness and feeling may arise. In terms of approach, I try to write while recognizing that art has its own intentions--which are sometimes entirely apart from my own. If a poem can be approached with humility, but nevertheless composed with courage, than that's the space I seek to occupy as a writer; I haven't mastered it yet, but I hope to."



*Plan*

## Upcoming Conferences

Because of limited space, this is not an exhaustive list of upcoming conferences. We offer our apologies for any omissions.

MSSA participates in the annual SSSR conference and sponsors various sessions throughout the weekend.

Future SSSR meetings:  
2010  
Baltimore, Maryland  
Sheraton Baltimore City  
Center  
October 29-31

2011  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Hyatt Regency  
Milwaukee  
October 28-30

2012  
Phoenix, Arizona  
Hyatt Regency Phoenix  
November 9-11

## APRIL

- 8-9 Restoration Studies Symposium (Sunstone Midwest): "How Christian are Mormons? How Mormon is the Community of Christ?"  
-Independence, Missouri  
[www.jwha.info/meetings/registrationRSS10.asp](http://www.jwha.info/meetings/registrationRSS10.asp)

## MAY

- 21- Mormon Scholars in the Humanities: "The Family and Human Relationships in History, Literature, Art, and Philosophy"  
22 -Claremont, California  
[www.mormonscholars.org](http://www.mormonscholars.org)
- 
- 27- Mormon History Association: "The Home and the Homeland: Families in Diverse Mormon Traditions"  
30 -Independence, Missouri  
[www.mhahome.org](http://www.mhahome.org)

## JULY

- 15- European Mormon Studies Association: "European Mormonism and its Experience in Media and the Public Sphere"  
16 -Tilburg, Holland  
-Proposals submission deadline: April 15  
[www.euromormonstudies.com](http://www.euromormonstudies.com)

## AUGUST

- 4-7 Sunstone Symposium: "Reflections on Maturing Faith"  
-Salt Lake City, Utah  
-Proposals submission deadline: May 1  
[www.sunstonemagazine.com](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com)

## SEPTEMBER

- 22- John Whitmer Historical Association: "1860-2010: The Sesquicentennial of the Reorganization"  
26 -Amboy, Illinois  
[www.jwha.info](http://www.jwha.info)

## OCTOBER

- 29- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion: "Religion in Global Perspective"  
31 -Baltimore, Maryland  
[www.sssrweb.org](http://www.sssrweb.org)

## NOVEMBER

- 11- Mormon Media Studies Symposium: "Mormon Media Studies: Across Time, Space, and Disciplines"  
12 -Provo, Utah  
-Papers submission deadline: June 30  
<http://ce.byu.edu/cw/mmstudies>

## New and Recent Publications of Interest

Stephen C. Taysom, Shakers, Mormons, and Religious Worlds: Conflicting Visions, Contested Boundaries (Indiana University Press, 2010).

Hugh J. Cannon and Reid L. Neilson, To the Peripheries of Mormondom: The Apostolic Around-the-World Journey of David O McKay, 1920-1921 (University of Utah Press, 2010).

W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall, Mormonism: A Historical Encyclopedia (Abc-Clío Inc., 2010).

Mark T. Decker and Michael Austin, Peculiar Portrayals: Mormons on the Page, Stage and Screen (Utah State University Press, 2010).

Dan Barker, Unique Stories and Facts from LDS History (Cedar Fort, 2010).

Elna Baker, The New York Regional Mormon Singles Halloween Dance: A Memoir (Dutton, 2009)

Benjamin C. Pykles and Robert L. Schuyler, Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America (University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

John Gary Maxwell, Gettysburg to Great Salt Lake: George R. Maxwell, Civil War Hero and Federal Marshal Among the Mormons (University of Oklahoma Press, 2010).

Thomas M. Spencer, The Missouri Mormon Experience (University of Missouri Press, 2010).

Jared Farmer, On Zion's Mount: Mormons, Indians, and the American Landscape, 2nd ed. (Harvard University Press, 2010).

Nestor Curbelo, History of the Mormons in Uruguay, 2nd ed. (Greg Kofford Books, Inc, 2010)

Flora Jessop and Paul T. Brown, Church of Lies (John Wiley and Sons, 2009).

Stephen Carter, ed., Best of Mormonism: An Anthology of Great Recently Published Writing by Mormon Authors (Curelom Books, 2009).

Kristine Haglund, ed., Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought 43, no. 1, (Spring 2010).

## Bulletin Board

...a space for MSSA members to share news, announcements, and other tidbits.

To include your own announcement or news in the Bulletin Board, please send an email to Rene (reneromig@gmail.com) or Bosco (boscoocsob@gmail.com)

### Additional Announcements

The Harold B. Lee Library announces the launch of the new Mormon Migration web site:  
[lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration](http://lib.byu.edu/mormonmigration)

### Publications

ARMAND MAUSS recently published an article in *Archivo Teologico Torinese* entitled "The Mormon Church and Its Intellectuals: Traditions and Transitions" (2009). A pdf version of this article is available upon request (maussal@cox.net).

ETHAN YORGASON's article "Contests over latter-day space: Mormonism's role within Evangelical geopolitics as seen through last-days novels" will appear in *Mapping the End Times: American Evangelical Geopolitics and Apocalyptic Visions*, edited by J. Dittmer and T. Sturm (2010). Yorgason comments that "much of this edited volume can be helpful for Mormons who want to understand the relationship between LDS last-days thinking and conservative evangelical forms of last-days thinking".

BENJAMIN C PYKLES, Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Anthropology at the State University of New York at Potsdam, has a forthcoming book entitled *Excavating Nauvoo: The Mormons and the Rise of Historical Archaeology in America* (University of Nebraska Press, 2010). According to the University of Nebraska Press, "this well-researched account weaves together multiple viewpoints in examining the many contentious issues surrounding the archaeology and restoration of the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, providing an illuminating picture of the early days of professional historical archaeology".

GORDON SHEPHERD and GARY SHEPHERD have various new and forthcoming publications.

Their article "Prophecy Channels and Prophetic Modalities: A Comparison of

Revelation in The Family International and the LDS Church" was published in the December issue of *JSSR* (Vol. 48, No. 4, December 2009).

Their new book, *Talking with the Children of God: Prophecy and Transformation in a Radical Religious Group* (University of Illinois Press, 2010) will be published in May.

Also look for their article "Gender Differences in the Early Patriarchal Blessings of the LDS Church" in the next *JWHA* journal.

CARDELL JACOBSON is the editor of *Modern Polygamy in the United States: Historical, Cultural, and Legal Issues* (University of Oxford Press, fall 2010). Several MSSA members have contributed to the volume. For more information and a table of contents, search for the book at [www.oup.com/us/catalog/general](http://www.oup.com/us/catalog/general).

### Other News

HENRI GOOREN (Sociology/ Anthropology, Oakland University) will receive a \$ 100,000 Pentecostal-Charismatic Research Initiative grant from the Templeton Foundation for his proposal "The Pentecostalization of Religion and Society in Paraguay and Chile." Less than 5 percent of all proposals received funding. Using ethnographic research, semi-structured interviews, and surveys, Pentecostal and non-Pentecostal churches and organizations are analyzed in Chile and Paraguay. Chile has the oldest and strongest Pentecostal churches of Latin America, whereas Pentecostal growth only recently started in Paraguay, providing a clear contrast in levels of Pentecostalization.