



# Mormon Social Science Association

*...bringing social science to Mormonism*

Spring 2011 Newsletter, Volume 31, Issue 1

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## President's Message

Greetings Fellow MSSA Members:

Is it really “The Mormon Moment”? Given the interest by various media outlets, it is sure beginning to seem like it. Over the last couple of months I have fielded inquiries by two prominent magazines looking for people who can be interviewed or otherwise contribute to articles on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Neither have released their stories yet, but they should be coming out in the next couple of months (I'll be sure to make note of them on the MSSA website when they do). Media inquiries seem like a perfect opportunity to take advantage of the breadth and depth of knowledge the MSSA holds and I will continue to send reporters and other media inquiries to the membership when appropriate.

Turning to the more scholarly focus of the Association, there will be two MSSA sponsored, Mormon-themed sessions at the upcoming SSSR/MSSA meeting in October in Wisconsin. One of the sessions is a general interest session on Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, and Seventh-day Adventists that includes two papers on the growth of these three religions and one paper that focuses on the environmentalism attitudes of Mormons. A second session is an “author(s) meet critics” session for the recently published book edited by Cardell Jacobson, “Modern Polygamy in the United States.” Several other members of the MSSA contributed chapters and two members of the MSSA will be on the panel of critics reviewing the book. The Fall issue of the newsletter will likely contain a complete list of the papers and sessions on Mormonism.

Our website remains a relatively popular destination. We average close to 2,000 unique visitors per month with close to 4,000 visits and over 12,000 hits. Some of the most popular pages are the “working papers” Richley Crapo contributed to the site a couple of years ago. Let me briefly remind members of the MSSA of this feature of the site. If you have papers on or related to Mormonism that you either would like some feedback on or simply have not been able to publish elsewhere but are social scientific in their approach, please do consider posting them on the MSSA website. The website does not claim copyright – all authors retain full copyright. Additionally, with the exception of converting the paper into HTML format to make it more indexable by search engines, the website administrator (me) exercises very limited editorial review (limited to ensuring that the work is social scientific and not offensive). Good examples of such work could include student papers from classes that are

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informative but not quite good enough to make it into a peer-reviewed journal. The view of the MSSA on this is that all such work helps current and future scholars in developing their own research and the website will serve as a platform to make that work publicly available.

Finally, I'd like to thank all those who contributed to make the Glenn Vernon lecture possible. I've heard from several members of the MSSA that it was a highlight of the conference for many to hear Douglas Davies.

I look forward to seeing everyone at the meeting in October and hope you all have a productive summer.

Best,

Ryan T. Cragun  
MSSA President  
University of Tampa

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## 2010 GLENN VERNON MEMORIAL LECTURE

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The 2010 Glenn Vernon Memorial Lecture, given by Douglas J. Davies at the SSSR/MSSA annual conference last October in Baltimore, Maryland, was positively received by conference attendees. With the generous permission of Professor Davies, we are delighted to reprint his lecture in its entirety here.

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### Mormon Reflections: Levels of Understanding and Engagement

Douglas J. Davies

In recent years I have become interested in religious emotions and their ensuing moods because of how groups come to prefer and manage certain of these in relation to their core values, beliefs or doctrines. Reflecting the title of my first LDS book, *Mormon Spirituality*, my interest in this direction was driven by this notion of spirituality as one that combined belief with allied emotions and ensuing moods. In 'spirituality', doctrine and feeling evolve together as a group comes to favour and then manage particular combinations of them. In sociological terms we have been inclined to use the notion of *habitus* to account for this perspective upon social actors. Though this is a term used casually in Weber's *Sociology of Religion* it is much more frequently associated with Pierre Bourdieu's work in sociology and, occasionally, with Marcel Mauss's 'techniques of the body' in anthropology.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Max Weber (1963: 158-59). Pierre Bourdieu ([1972] 1977). Marcel Mauss ([1933]1979).

Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

*Ponder*

Also in anthropological terms such 'spirituality' relates to the symbolic classification evident in a group, to the way ideas and practices are configured, experienced, and embodied. Such configurations of values and allied emotions and moods become second nature to group members while, to the social scientist, they can often be accessed through a group's art or identified in type-scenes or paradigmatic scenes that depict a group's prime concerns. The figure of Jesus is often central to such scenes within Christian traditions, and no less so than in LDS Restoration traditions. And he is, likewise, central to this lecture.

Alongside this LDS mood and scene-focused concern, I am taking the liberty in this lecture of engaging in some personal reflections on my own study of Mormons during a period of just over forty years, a period in which I have sometimes been much involved in pondering LDS material and sometimes been very much engaged in quite different topics within the study of religion, topics that have, nevertheless, often shed light on LDS material or been illuminated by it. I was prompted, in part, to think in this way when I saw that there was a panel within this Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Conference focused on some of my own Mormon studies, but I was, more firmly prompted into a reflective mode because this lecture is the Glenn Vernon Memorial Lecture.

With that in mind, let me start again and more properly, by thanking you for your invitation to come to this session within this conference of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion and to deliver the Glenn Vernon Memorial Lecture. When I received your invitation there was, quite simply, no doubt in my mind but that I very much wanted to accept it, for here was an opportunity not only to recall and acknowledge an individual scholar's work but also, more important still as far as I am concerned, to recall his kindness to myself, and that in two particulars.

To recall the first takes me back a full 37 years when Glenn Vernon contacted me to ask if he might republish in a collection of readings on 'Research in Mormonism' a paper of mine entitled 'Aspects of Latter-day saint Eschatology'. This had appeared in the UK in 1973 in the significant but relatively short run series *-Yearbook of Religion in Britain-* edited by Michael Hill and David Martin. That had been my very first publication, and had emerged from my first postgraduate thesis on the LDS so recently completed at Oxford under the supervision of Bryan Wilson of All Souls College. That research had emerged practically by accident through discussion with Wilson, for I had had no previous contact with and not much knowledge of the LDS movement before that time. But Wilson had people working on many religious groups and it fell to me, as it were, to do the Mormons.

So it was that to be asked for my first paper to be reproduced in a specifically LDS collection was quite something for me at that very early point in my

"I received a personal letter from him [Glenn Vernon], whose greetings and message has lived with me a long time and which caused me some joy when I received your invitation to give this lecture in his memory."

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

career. It was published, coincidentally, in 1974, the year I was appointed to my first academic post in the study of religion at the University of Nottingham in the English Midlands. There I was asked to develop the study of religion and my LDS endeavours were much overtaken not only by having to prepare and deliver lectures across entire undergraduate generations on wide aspects of religion but also by having to develop new research ideas. One avenue of research that I decided to follow in the later 1970s and early 1980s was the Sikh religion, engaging in some work both in the UK and a little in the Punjab. My decision to work on Sikhs was, itself, influenced by my existing LDS work. I decided that, if the Latter-day Saints could be viewed as a modern development of a western form of religion, it would be sensible to look at an eastern tradition that was, also, relatively new. The fact that Mormons and Sikhs shared what looked at the time to a person who had been appointed to teach the phenomenology of religion something of a similar set of phenomena presented an appeal of its own. Here we had a specific territory, Utah and the Punjab; initial leaders and a succession of Gurus and Prophets; new sacred texts in the Guru Granth Sahib and the Book of Mormon, not to mention a focal sacred building in Amritsar's Golden Temple and Salt Lake City's Temple. Some of these points took shape alongside additional studies in anthropology, sociology and phenomenology in my *Meaning and Salvation in Religious Studies* published by Brill in Leiden in 1984 as its annual monograph supplement to the journal *Numen*, of the *History of Religions Journal* series. One of its chapters was entitled 'Identity in Sikh and Mormon Soteriology'.

Now that I felt I was getting to know something about religious studies, and with that Brill monograph completed, I took myself back to further LDS work, all those notes one gathers and does not use in one's first thesis, as well as additional researches with the outcome that I published in 1987 that strange little book entitled *Mormon Spirituality: Latter-day Saints in Wales and Zion*. I am grateful that Nottingham University helped me publish that text because publishers were not very hospitably inclined to it. I was and am also grateful to Utah State University Press for their collaboration in its distribution in the USA.

And that brings me back to Glenn Vernon and his second kindness, for it was not long after its publication that I received a personal letter from him, whose greetings and message has lived with me a long time and which caused me some joy when I received your invitation to give this lecture in his memory. For he wrote to tell me that he belonged to a study-group of scholars who had taken my *Mormon Spirituality* for their recent group reading. He wanted me to know that they had enjoyed reading it and had appreciated it. He added that, while being a Latter-day Saint and a social scientist he had, nevertheless, found himself learning something about his own tradition that he had not quite grasped before. You will appreciate how encouraging that was for a young scholar who had but relatively little experience of heartland Mormonism. To me, it was also a kind letter, something that I might describe in theoretical

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

To me, it was also a kind letter, something that I might describe in theoretical terms as pertaining to Marcel Mauss's category of the 'fourth obligation', of an inalienable gift, a kind of blessing.

**My scope**

That indicates something of the complex relationships that any researcher is likely to develop with members of groups they may study, let alone the life-factors underlying our own ventures in research. Though, having said that, and wearing my anthropological hat, I do not belong to that generation of British scholars grounded in a deep reflexivity, and have not hitherto given any part of my books over to extensive description of 'where I am coming from', or any account of personal life-dynamics, except to make it clear that in terms of religious tradition I am Anglican and not, therefore, LDS. One probably needs more insight than I currently possess, and much more time than one presently finds, to engage in that form of analytical autobiography.

What I can say, is that I have, inevitably, over the years become increasingly aware of the complex nature of the interplay of methods, scholarly influence, and personal inclinations underlying research. As part of that I have also found it increasingly difficult to label my approach to things. This is why I am always keen, I suppose, to differentiate between -on the one hand- methodology as the study of available methods and the choice of appropriate approaches to any topic, and -on the other hand- of discrete methods themselves. I need that clarity at the abstract level, at least when thinking about things, because, in practice, I find myself mixing methods in the development of a kind of eclecticism drawing widely from anthropology, sociology, and psychology and also from some forms of theology. All of which being sustained by an awareness of the importance of historical perspectives. Such an eclecticism satisfies my sense that all knowledge is one and that I can have very small bites at its immensity, but I know it will frustrate purists of each method.

But what can you expect of someone whose initial degree grew out of zoology and psychology into anthropology, whose first research was conducted through an Institute of Social Anthropology, but with a clear sociologist as supervisor, whilst also attending the psychology of religion Lectures of Michael Argyle: and who then went on to study theology at Durham and to teach at Nottingham for some twenty years, not least in weekly joint seminars with John Heywood Thomas, philosopher of religion who worked with Paul Tillich and was also a member of the Kierkegaard Academy. And set all that alongside decades of engagement in various kinds of pastoral ministry within the Church of England running alongside an academic career. In the abstract it is almost too much to bear, but in retrospect a great joy!

Whether or not that long introductory background will be useful for the points that I now wish to develop, time alone will tell. For today I want to sketch four

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

fields which have produced key questions or perspectives that influence my own thinking and which do have some centre of gravity more in one discipline than another. In approaching these issues let me acknowledge and thank as funding bodies, The British Academy and The Arts and Humanities Research Council, and for Visiting Fellowships, Oxford University's Rothermere American Institute and The Huntington Library in Pasadena. Durham University, as ever, is a constant support.

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 12)

## Artistic Corner

Your editors see the Artistic Corner as an opportunity to feature a creative response to the very 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. In this issue, we include an interview with actor and director Kymberly Mellen ([mellenheadprods.com](http://mellenheadprods.com)).



The following excerpted interview, by Shelia Cospers, is reprinted courtesy of [MormonArtist.net](http://MormonArtist.net).

Photos reprinted courtesy of Tiffany Tertipes unless otherwise noted.

What was the motivation for dedicating your life to acting?

It was something I knew I was good at and that I felt great doing! Joseph Campbell talks about finding and following your “bliss”—the thing that makes you excited to wake up in the morning and engage in the day. It is an activity that provides a cyclical energy by refueling you physically and emotionally while you serve and work so very hard. That’s what acting, directing, and teaching does for me. I continue to receive as much from these activities as I give. I love the amazing, generous people I have the opportunity to interact with in rehearsals. I think actors and artists are amazingly charitable, empathetic, astute, and knowledgeable people.

### Kymerly Mellen interview continued:

You recently appeared in the Joseph Smith movie. What was that experience like?



It was an amazing experience. The director/writer, Gary Cook, wrote the part for me. Although most of the other characters in the film are readily identifiable from Church history, he wanted at least one storyline that wasn't instantly recognizable or predictable—a story that included moments of doubt and conflict in relationship to the Church. He combined several journal and Church history stories that are not attached to specific names and crammed them into one family's storyline. I play the unnamed blacksmith's wife who receives a Book of Mormon from Joseph Smith. I marry a widower with small children, many of whom are

burned to death by the mob. Our last child falls ill as my husband is faltering in his faith and Joseph Smith's blessing restores the child to health.

It was filmed over the course of a year, trying to match the seasons with the actual locations as much as possible. We filmed in Nauvoo and Springfield, Illinois, and in several lots in the back of the LDS Motion Picture Studio in Provo, as well as Upper Canada Village, Canada—a fully functioning frontier town. It was a unique experience in that the script was under the supervision of many individuals, all of whom had power to cut dialogue, so we often didn't have dialogue until the morning of the shoot and much of it was also improvised. We started and ended each day with a prayer on set. Every actor with a speaking role was required to be LDS and temple-worthy. The spirit of cooperation and mutual respect was overwhelming. Multiple miracles occurred every day as weather cleared, sicknesses abated, accidents were averted, and all of our talents were magnified beyond our natural abilities.

I developed a strong kinship with the pioneers as individual, struggling people. The last day of filming we were on the bank of the Nauvoo River in the heat of summer with mosquitoes galore, reenacting the cholera epidemic. We had over a hundred extras all donating their time and energy so willingly in those trying circumstances; you can see them in the wide shots. We all felt some idea of what the pioneers were actually going through—although we were only on that location for twelve hours and the pioneers camped there for weeks in the mud with meager supplies and illness all around. Our mud was makeup, the sweat trickling down our faces and staining our clothing was glycerin, but it's the closest I've come to viscerally relating to their challenges physically,

"Our mud was makeup, the sweat trickling down our faces and staining our clothing was glycerin, but it's the closest I've come to viscerally relating to [the pioneers'] challenges physically, emotionally, and spiritually."

"I want to be challenged'; I want to do something that scares me to death."

### Kymerly Mellen interview continued:

emotionally, and spiritually. It was wonderful to be surrounded by so many actors whose work I admire and who are professional and spiritual mentors to me: Gary Cook, T.C. Christensen, Tayva Patch, Rick Macy, Nathan Mitchell, and Katherine Nelson.



Mississippi River, Nauvoo, Illinois. Photograph by Rene Romig

What is your preferred type of role?

I want to be challenged; I want to do something that scares me to death. I want a role that I don't understand with a scene partner or ensemble that I feel completely inferior to. If I feel fully prepared and fully confident, I won't be learning. I always want to be advancing in my craft and knowledge, not sitting back on my laurels.

Balance is so important and it is sometimes difficult when we lead active lives. How do you maintain a spiritual balance with your work, your time away from home, your husband, and your children? What links you to home?

"Theatre is about life, life is not about theatre." That's one of my favorite creeds, though it is difficult to apply to everyday life since this is such a time-demanding profession. To be honest, sometimes that balance is completely lacking in my life. There's a saying within the acting community, "I can't, I have rehearsals," and that's what it often feels like. I miss out on a lot of family time and events. Each day I try to realign my priorities, organize my schedule, and simplify. My patriarchal blessing promises me that if I make time for my husband and children and express my love often and freely there will be great joy in my home. My husband is constantly reminding me to do just this: to leave my business at the office and when I am home in person to be present and engaged with the children. I have never missed attending sacrament meeting more than two Sundays in a row, no matter the inconvenience or rehearsal and performance schedule. I specifically ask for callings so that I will develop service relationships in my ward and feel needed.

"I need to feel and empathize deeply and have the courage to portray those lives with truth, accuracy, and insight."

### Kymerly Mellen interview continued:

How do you see acting influencing the lives of others?

I was reading *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens lately and I am always struck by Jacob Marley's anguished outburst, "Mankind was my business!" Mankind is my business too; it is my job to understand people and their actions at a deeper psychological level. I need to feel and empathize deeply and have the courage to portray those lives with truth, accuracy, and insight. Leo Tolstoy said that theatre has the opportunity to be more effective than any pulpit. There is a captive audience, with an open mind, ready to be entertained, and unaware that they might actually be inspired by the end of the performance. The chance we have as performers to hold the mirror up to life and help audiences become more aware of their interactions with others, the direction their choices are leading, the consequences of self-destructive and unkind actions, and their current relationship with God—these are amazing opportunities.

What do you feel is the importance of art (performance, visual, and literary) in the lives of members?

Other than the audience that reads this sort of magazine, I don't feel there is much importance for

art in the perception of members and that saddens me. I think they believe it is a cultural exposure that their children would benefit from; that participating in performing teaches self-discipline, social skills, and increases self-esteem; and that art is useful as entertainment. However, I'm not sure that art, as a career, is respected or encouraged because it is not a stable profession nor financially lucrative. I think we're such busy people that we don't make or take time for the arts. We promise as part of our temple covenants to feed our spirits as often as our physical bodies and to me, participating in the arts is an excellent way to feed our spirits—to reconnect with our emotional life and learn from others' lives.

How does theatre and acting enhance the experience of the gospel?

Doing the research, suspending personal judgment, really trying to understand the why behind a character's actions is the closest I come to Christ-like empathy for another human being. I might not condone the behavior of the characters I play, but I understand why they do the things they do. We rarely give any other human being that kind of benefit of the doubt.



**Kymerly Mellen interview continued:**

As members of the Church, we are familiar with vicarious work for the dead. I feel like acting is doing vicarious work for the living. I am vicariously living another's life, real or imagined. I am helping my audience to vicariously view the world through another lens or prism, to experience the blessings and trials that come from making certain choices, to see others in an empathetic light.

How do you see your work helping build the kingdom?

It depends on the trajectory of my future professional life. Thus far, I feel I am building the kingdom in two distinct ways.

First, I am unashamedly a working Mormon actor, willing to discuss anything with anyone in the industry. I have many, many spiritual discussions with others not of my faith. I am a strong promoter of marriage and the family and having children. I love seeing my non-member friends have the courage to commit to one another and start a family, despite the prevailing trends. I hope my example has something to do with their decisions. I hope my friendship and good humor and transparency in discussing all things I hold dear makes me a non-confrontational ambassador of my faith.

Secondly, specifically while teaching at BYU, I have the opportunity to train future performers, not only in their craft, but also in their approach to the profession and ways to incorporate their faith into all they do. My influence on these young adults will have a ripple effect in the performing community as they go on to both worldly success and raising their own families. I'm helping to train a performing workforce that will represent BYU and the Church as compassionate, non-judgmental, inquisitive, and generous people.

Tell us about your current projects and what you hope to achieve for yourself and for the broader community.

This past December I filmed an independent film, *Boy with Blue*, directed by David Thorpe and written by Matthew Greene—two recent BYU graduates. It's about a couple dealing with the recent death of their teenage son in a drunk driving accident. I think it's a terrific plug for film festivals because the 108-page script was filmed in a two-day period of two full takes. There were lots of long shots and tricky shots traveling back and forth between the present time and past memories with real-time choreographed camera moves and quick set dressing. We rehearsed it similarly to a theatre piece with continuous action. It deals with the unpredictable and complicated process of grief and forgiveness. Two of my current BYU students are also in it—Heidi Smith and Benny Isaacs. Being married to a low-budget filmmaker, I love to support other fledgling filmmakers whenever possible.

I just finished recording some voices for a BYU Radio version of *A Christmas Carol*. I will be directing a conservatory play winter semester at BYU, which

"I hope I can bring not only entertainment, but also perspective, inspiration, and healing to [my audiences'] lives."

### Kymerly Mellen interview continued:

means that tickets will not be sold. It is primarily for the actors to concentrate on the craft of character development without the distractions of major technical elements. I have chosen *Fefu and Her Friends* by María Irene Fornés. It was written in the 1970s but is set in the 1930s and is a strongly feminist piece with elements of realism and absurdism.

I will be performing at the Utah Shakespeare Festival this coming summer, but they haven't made any casting decisions as of now. As I mentioned I had an amazing past summer playing *Lady Macbeth* and *Beatrice* with three of my children also in the cast.

I am writing a one-woman show dealing with the sinking of the *Titanic* and *Irene Colbert*, the only known Mormon to die aboard. She was an LDS midwife from Provo who defied her husband and ecclesiastical leaders to go attend midwifery school in London. I hope to perform the show sometime next year to coincide with the 100th anniversary of the tragedy. It deals with the conflicts between motherhood and career, social consciousness, and the support we can offer one another during the transitions of birth and death.

I also have until April left on my BYU contract. I teach beginning and intermediate acting, auditions, voice, and speech and ethics.

How do you want to be remembered?

In the long run I want to be remembered as a loving wife, mother, daughter, and sister who did her best to serve others and improve herself in this life by following Christ's example. I realize that what I do for a living is of lesser importance than how I raise my family.



However, I have the added blessing and responsibility of touching many people's lives through my teaching and performing.

I hope I can help audiences re-examine their choices and relationships and do what is necessary to come closer to those they love. I hope I can help them identify and personally avoid some of the tragic choices the great characters in literature have made. I hope I can bring not only entertainment, but also perspective, inspiration, and healing to their lives.

## 2010 Glenn Vernon Memorial Lecture

(continued from page 6)

### **Sociological-anthropological**

Early work in the sociology of knowledge produced one intriguing issue for me, viz., how does that apparently widespread drive for meaning become a need of salvation? Max Weber's theme of a group's orientation to the world operates here. It was that issue that led me to equate what once would have been called primitive religions with the world religions of salvation. They all generate meaning and, it seemed to me, that salvation could be defined in terms of the sociology of knowledge and of plausibility theory in particular. So it was that I initially ventured to define salvation as a sufficiency of plausibility, as a quality of meaning. More recently, and this will be apparent in my forthcoming book on *Emotions and Identity*, I have sought to take this further in what I call superplausibility, a process of meaning-making insight that leads not only to 'seeing' things in a particular way but also to 'seeing through' and which generates wisdom in persons of any culture.<sup>2</sup> This would have applications to the description of the *Homo religiosus* in any group and, not least, to certain kinds of LDS. We will return to this. This approach is conducive to a form of description that is, at the same time, a form of interpretation.

### **Emotions-studies**

Another long-term interest that has had opportunity to develop over the last six or so years concern studies of emotions, not least as informed by cognitive-science and evolutionary biology. I am, in fact, currently working on an Emotions Project funded by the UK Arts and Humanities research Council and I have a new book out in February 2011 on the topic, entitled *Emotion, Identity and Religion, Hope, Reciprocity and Otherness*. One of its concerns lies precisely in the way groups prefer and manage emotions, especially religious groups. Integrated into this perspective is the role of type-scenes or paradigmatic scenes that portray preferred emotions alongside key doctrines and offer windows into cultures, a perspective I have already implemented in my new book, *Joseph Smith, Jesus and Satanic Opposition: Atonement, Evil and the Mormon Vision*. This explores the three key LDS scenes of, first, the premortal council in heaven with its offers on and decision over the plan of salvation; second, the scene of Gethsemane with Jesus fulfilling his promised plan of atonement; third, the canonical version of Joseph Smith's First Vision. The emotions associated with obedience, pride, agony and bloody sweat, stifling evil and deliverance all bring these scenes to life. They highlight the importance of emotional expression and reflect something of Max Weber's allusion to how 'the religious mood is the true instrument of salvation'.<sup>3</sup> This is an intriguing element in Weber's thought given the fact that he is usually characterized as concerned with rationality and rational control of action. He links ritual with the generating of 'a devotion with a distinctive religious mood', but that is not my concern today.

<sup>2</sup>Douglas J. Davies (2011).

<sup>3</sup>Max Weber (1965:151).

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

What does interest me is how religious groups come to prefer and manage a particular cluster or configuration of emotions and moods in relation to their core values, concepts, beliefs or doctrines. Often, such a configuration of values along with their allied emotions and moods, become second nature to group members, and are seldom brought to explicit analysis, a task often left to the social scientist.

With this in mind I want now to examine one complex of LDS emotionality and its allied theological ideas under the heading of Christ and attractive inspiration, and this will be followed later by the issue of Christ and potential failure. As a self-directed caveat, let me acknowledge at the outset that to speak of Jesus in Mormon thought, as to speak of Jesus in the thought of any Christian tradition, is to enter the perilous territory of devotees each of whom probably owns his or her own image of Jesus and, as important perhaps, his or her sense of Jesus. As a background to such predilections, however, it is worth noting recent studies of popular USA Christological views, as in Richard Fox's *Jesus in America*, Stephen Prothero's *American Jesus*, or Olav Hammer's edited collection on *Alternative Christs*. There are many images of Jesus for groups to select and develop. And Mormonism has made more use of many of them than numerous other Christian groups. Though I have explored these widely in the new book today I focus more narrowly, and first on Jesus as the source of attractive inspiration.

### Attractive Inspiration

So, I now take up what I will call 'attractive inspiration' and Christ in the LDS tradition and do so through the case of Orson F. Whitney, grandson of Joseph Smith's associate Newell K. Whitney.<sup>4</sup> Born in 1855, he was much given to artistic-acting-literary ventures and, while describing himself as 'naturally religious', was also one who 'shunned religious discipline'. Life began to change when he was called to serve a mission. Although he describes himself as accepting, more by 'pride than piety' his lackadaisical outlook was halted and transformed through 'a dream, or a vision in a dream'.<sup>5</sup>

'I seemed to be in the Garden of Gethsemane, a witness of the Savior's agony. I saw Him as plainly as ever I have seen anyone'. Standing behind a tree, Orson sees Jesus enter the garden with Peter, James and John and bids them watch while he prays; but they fall asleep. Christ's intent is that, if possible, the cup be removed from him but, above all, that God's will be done.<sup>6</sup>

'As He prayed the tears streamed down his face, which was towards me. I was so moved at the sight that I also wept, out of

<sup>4</sup>His grandfather, Newell K. Whitney, was friend and co-worker with Joseph Smith. His father, Horace Kimball Whitney, studied in Joseph's School of the Prophets based in the Whitney Store in Kirtland.

<sup>5</sup>Orson F. Whitney (1930: 69, 68).

<sup>6</sup>Mark 14: 36.

"Orson [Whitney] described how he then awoke, 'with a sob 'in his throat, 'and it was morning'. But, from that hour, in 1877, he was 'never the same man again'."

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

pure sympathy. My whole heart went out to him: I loved him with all my soul, and I longed to be with him as I longed for nothing else...There he was, with the awful weight of the world's sin upon his shoulders, with the pangs of every man, woman and child shooting through his sensitive soul-and they could not watch with him one poor hour!

Whitney felt 'perfectly familiar with his appearance - face, form and movements. He was of noble stature and majestic mien-not at all the weak, effeminate being that some painters have portrayed; but the very God that he was and is, as meek and humble as a little child'.

Orson's dream then leapt beyond the crucifixion to see Jesus about to ascend to heaven with the three disciples: he is so overcome that he runs from behind the tree, grasps Jesus around the knees and asks to go too. Jesus lifts him and embraces him: this is all - 'so vivid, so real. I felt the very warmth of his body, as He held me in his arms and said in tenderest tones' that the others had finished their work. Orson asks fervently that he, too, might join Jesus 'at the last'. Jesus 'smiling sweetly' said, 'That will depend entirely upon yourself'. Orson described how he then awoke, 'with a sob' in his throat, 'and it was morning'. But, from that hour, in 1877, he was 'never the same man again'.<sup>7</sup>

Here emotions and ideas rise and engage with each other in the sharpest way. Gethsemane is the cultural-psychological context, ever potent in LDS thought, and Orson is a stay-awake witness to Christ's agony, to the 'pangs of every man, woman and child shooting through his sensitive soul' unlike the sleeping disciples, all ill-prepared we might say for their mission. Here we have the heart-felt sympathy and the love of longing that one person may have for another. Christ's manliness stands beyond all weakness and yet is utterly tender. He sees Christ's expressions, he feels the warmth of his embrace. When he expresses the desire to be with Jesus 'at the last' the reply is interesting. It is not the 'of course' response of idealized romanticism, but it is a statement of radical LDS ethics - 'that will depend upon yourself'. Here, incidentally, we see one cameo of relevance to the current interest in grace by some LDS, for we witness no simple 'love-grace union' that transcends issues of reciprocal accomplishment, even though the emotional and relational scene is almost perfectly set for it, rather we encounter the conditional assertion: 'that will depend upon yourself'. Here, we are presented with no simple grace-works opposition so often beloved of Protestant-Catholic-LDS discussions, it is far more than that. For Orson Whitney wakes from his dream 'with a sob in his throat' and asserts that 'he was never the same man again'.

This account takes us into the combined ideological-emotional core of that form of LDS piety where love and duty become mutually pervasive, where

<sup>7</sup>Orson F. Whitney (1930: 83).

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

attraction inspires to action. To speak of the 'cold duty', of obligation, of works or the like would be oddly redundant and existentially inappropriate in this scenario. Rather, we find the 'love-grace' union of many religious traditions taking a particular form, producing a person who will never be the same again. But the kind of emotional shock pervading this dream-experience, a shock evident in the sob on waking-up, indicates an emotional experience that, I would suggest, is not at all far removed from the conversion experiences often alluded to in evangelical Protestantism and which gives a sense of new-birth. But this narrative takes form under the classic LDS theological-ethics of self-directed action -'that will depend upon yourself'. To hear such words amidst an intimacy of emotion is to encounter the core LDS value of agency, itself a kind of sobering self-evaluation. The reflexive nature of this awareness is what may lead to a man 'never being the same man again', but it does not lead to the language of 'new-birth': for Orson was not 'born-again'. The figure of Jesus attracts and inspires agency. Seldom has Weber's assertion been more fully exemplified viz., that 'the religious mood is the true instrument of salvation'.<sup>8</sup>

**Burning in the breast**

If the Whitney case is deemed exceptional, let me complement it with a much more familiar LDS idiom related to emotions, viz., to the well known LDS motif of a 'burning in the breast'. As a characteristic of an LDS religious mood that one might describe at least as one instrument of salvation.

It is, of course, well-known from a revelation dated 1829 in the Doctrine and Covenants. There the prophet Joseph Smith's assistant, Oliver Cowdery, is told by God that, over a certain issue, he needs to 'study it out in your mind' and then ask God if his decision is correct. If it is, then God will 'cause that your bosom shall burn within you', if not correct then Oliver will simply experience 'a stupor of thought'.<sup>9</sup> These texts present an interesting folk-model of human life as a mind-body interplay of rational and emotional factors and reflects the Mormon mind-body dualism inherent in its ultimate doctrine of human nature. This 'burning in the breast' motif became common parlance within Mormonism and exemplifies a group-sanctioned sensation, one located in the chest, allied with heat and identified as a form of divine approval. In denoting an emotional experience pertaining to salvation this 'burning' comes into its own as a common means of communicating one's authentic sincerity. And how telling is its opposite, that 'stupor of thought', alluded to in the Doctrine and Covenants.

This burning motif is both theologically and emotionally reinforced by the hymn 'The Spirit of God Like A Fire is Burning', which we are told was 'added almost as an afterthought to the 1835 hymnbook but headed the entire 1844 edition'.<sup>10</sup> All this is understandable in the light of the Acts of the

<sup>8</sup>Max Weber (1965:151).

<sup>9</sup>Doctrine and Covenants 9: 8-9.

<sup>10</sup>Kurt F. Kammeyer (2003a: no page mark but p. 10).

"But, within Mormonism, the burning in the breast could never become a raging fire, not least if a routinization of revelatory charisma was to emerge amongst a growing lay membership."

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

Apostles episode of the Day of Pentecost when flames of fire appeared above the heads of the first apostles. The shift from above the heads of the former-day apostles into the hearts of the Latter-day Saints brings us to one of the topics of this lecture, the place of the emotions in Mormon Spirituality.

In using this phrase Mormon Spirituality, I am echoing the book of that title I published in 1987, *Mormon Spirituality, Latter-day Saints in Wales and Zion* where I discussed the notion of testimony in LDS culture as 'the intuitional aspect of mind and life brought to an emotional grasp of the teaching and yielding a commitment to the focus of identity as a Mormon'.<sup>11</sup>

In a movement whose early history depended not upon theological education but upon the inner sense of authenticity of prophet and revelations and on an answering sense of authenticity in the follower, this form of authenticity and authentication played a vital role.

But, within Mormonism, the burning in the breast could never become a raging fire, not least if a routinization of revelatory charisma was to emerge amongst a growing lay membership. Accordingly, it is complemented by the ongoing role of a 'quiet and calm certainty', often allied with a certain tone of voice', one underlying, I think, what Brigham H. Roberts in 1891 described as a 'new school of Mormon Oratory' that embodied the combination of personal sincerity combined with institutional control.<sup>12</sup> This tonality combined with what I also highlighted as a form of 'humility' associated with an 'increasing sensitivity and gentleness', and with 'an emotional warmth' further emotional factors which I connected with a process in which 'personal assertiveness yields to service' (Idem.). In that same chapter on the concept of the Mormon *Homo religiosus* I pinpointed the issue of a 'sense of passivity, of being acted upon' as something very evident in Mormonism 'despite its activist approach to life', and which fostered that 'attitude of grateful humility' which I saw as vital for the success of an organization grounded in a 'lay-hierarchy'.<sup>13</sup>

It is precisely the positive charge placed upon this responsive cluster of sustaining emotions that contrasts so powerfully with acts of apostasy, of a hardening of heart that goes much further than the mere 'stupor of thought' just mentioned above: apostasy is, itself an emotion-filled life-engagement. But I pursue that line no further here, though I have in the new LDS book.

### Death studies

Let me, rather, now turn to the theme of death as another point of access to LDS world-views. Or rather to the theme of death transcendence, an issue deeply implicit in the Orson Whitney account above. I do this having spent a

<sup>11</sup>Douglas J. Davies (1987: 131)

<sup>12</sup>Brigham H. Roberts (1987: 133).

<sup>13</sup>Douglas J. Davies (1987: 134).

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

good deal of time since the late 1980s researching and writing in the anthropology and theology of death, funerary rites, and currently on aspects of spirituality and end of life care in the UK National Health Service.

Certainly, approaches to death, cultural idioms, and paradigmatic scenes are as telling here as the other motifs already discussed, when it comes to seeing what a group is like.

I mentioned, earlier, how Glenn Vernon had requested my first paper on LDS eschatology for reproducing in his *Research on Mormonism*. I recall that here to focus our thoughts for a moment on his early work on death, first published in 1973, and also reproduced in that collection, and rehearsed, too for a further reason to be mentioned in a moment. As for the data: he describes some 1500 college aged students covering major denominations. The LDS students had a 92% belief in an afterlife, (with Catholics following at 78% and Presbyterians at 49%), 88% of LDS possessing a strong wish to live after death (Catholics 61% and Presbyterians 46%). As might be anticipated the LDS students had a strong anticipation of 'reunion with your loved ones' at 90% (Catholics 53% and Presbyterians 43%). Other results included 68% of LDS thinking that their religious observance might 'somehow benefit the state of those already dead: here they were similar to the Catholics (66%). In terms of fear of death, some 86% of the LDS thought that their own religious experience had 'served to decrease their fear of death', compared with 57% of the Catholics and 60% of the Presbyterians. In terms of being worried about the afterlife 81% of the LDS were not worried, (overtaken by the 86% of Presbyterians; presumably because about half of them did not believe in an afterlife at all). As to the question of whether these folk felt they would be able to deal with a bereavement in an adequate fashion if it happened to them now, he found 62% of the LDS thinking they could, compared with 44% of Catholics and 34% of Presbyterians.

	LDS	Catholics	Presbyterians
Afterlife	92	78	49
Wish for afterlife	88	61	46
Anticipated reunion	90	53	43
Benefit the dead	68	66	9
Fear of death decreased	86	57	60

The overall picture of this early 1970s scenario shows a large number of young LDS students believing in an afterlife, looking forward to it, and not afraid of what it might have to offer. Most had a sense that they would be reunited with loved ones. What is more some 83% of the LDS reported having spoken about death with others, as had 71% of Presbyterians and 70% of Catholics. One of Vernon's conclusions was that death was less of a taboo

"Christology and ecclesial ritual combine in a future oriented death conquest culture."

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

amongst LDS than it was for the other groups in the study. Death as a taboo topic had been the subtext of his study.

This picture would probably not surprise those familiar with LDS life at that time. But I invoke that study not only for its intrinsic interest but because it prompts some comment on the theme of death in Mormon groups and of death in surrounding social worlds, especially in the USA. There are two points that have interested me here, one speculative theme on Mormonism's origin and a second on the absence of rapture motifs in later twentieth century Mormonism compared with some significant USA Evangelical attitudes.

Death was a central concern of my *Mormon Culture of Salvation*, an example of how other academic studies were influencing my LDS studies. There I dwelt a little on Joseph Smith's grief at his brother Alvin's death, seeing that as a major factor underlying his later revelations on vicarious baptism and on rituals that were, in essence, rites of death transcendence. Allied with the anguish of grief, it seemed to me, was the deep experience of agonizing pain rooted in his boyhood leg-operation as depicted by William Morain's psychological-medical study. Here, I think, we may also see something of a trauma that afforded Joseph a distinctive affinity with the textual accounts of the agony of Christ in Gethsemane. At least Joseph's mother's recall of that event seems quite evocative to me: her son 'pale as a corpse' with 'big drops of sweat ...rolling down his face, every feature of which depicted an agony that cannot be described'.<sup>14</sup> Historical and sociological interpretation -as intimately intertwined as these may sometimes be as Evans-Pritchard once reminded us in his essay on Anthropology and History- such interpretation can easily ignore emotional dynamics with which we are existentially unfamiliar in our own lives. And we mostly now live in a relatively pain-free world. But pain can be an enormously influential factor, even if we have to be rather speculative in our approach to it. But, certainly, in the religious world, and in the interplay of experience and religious ideas I think that varieties of Christology bear heavily upon a person or a group's wider experience as the various recent studies of Jesus in America as in Stephen Prothero's *The American Jesus* (2003) and Richard Fox's *Jesus in America: Personal Saviour, Cultural Hero, National Obsession* (2004) have shown, not to mention Olav Hammer's edited collection on *Alternative Christs* (2009). Whatever else is depicted within the Mormon Jesus, and there is a great deal, the factor of the enormity of the agony of the son in fulfilling obedience to his father remains central. The responsive obedience expected of LDS to this act of atonement takes them into a ritual world of collective death transcendence that had its profile in Glenn Vernon's study. Christology and ecclesial ritual combine in a future oriented death conquest culture.

This, it seems to me, is rather unlike that rather stereotypical and potentially unfair images of a general American way of death as death avoidance,

<sup>14</sup>Scot Facer Proctor and Maurine Jensen Proctor (1996: 75).

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

depicted in a cosmetically sleeping corpse, in Evelyn Waugh's 1948 *The Loved One* or Jessica Mitford's *The American Way of Death* of 1963. Societies are always more complex than such simplicity might propose. So it is that, much more recently, Marilyn Marvin and David Ingle have offered their rather different Durkheimian interpretation of military deaths, where the blood-sacrifice of young lives is interpreted as the cement that binds the Union and makes the nation. The historian Mark Schantz, too, has presented impressive arguments on the strong and widely shared belief in the afterlife accompanying a folk realism of death as typical of nineteenth century USA in his study *Awaiting the Heavenly Country: The Civil War and America's Culture of Death* of 2008.

The second point concerning death in the USA that fascinates me in relation to Mormonism's death-conquest culture lies in a much more recent 'awaiting of the heavenly country' through the phenomenon of the rapture that has been espoused by considerable numbers of Evangelical Christians. While earliest Mormonism possessed an element of rapture belief, in the sense of Christ's second coming, and that right soon, it was soon transformed and taken in other directions: not least into Utah. But contemporary Mormons are not, it would seem, keen on the rapture motifs of those evangelicals hoping not to be 'left behind' when the faithful are taken up to be with God.

If it is the case that a degree of death avoidance does characterize swathes of American life, and if the cosmetically sleeping corpse symbolizes that view, then perhaps we could see the rapture as a further step in the direction of death avoidance: one simply does not need to die at all. That this view would be unappealing to mainstream LDS is intelligible in terms of the organization of the church as, itself, a Christ-based, and obedience responsive institution that achieves in more pragmatic ways that which the rapture promises, viz., death transcendence. Parley P. Pratt, that curiously creative nineteenth century thinker, pressed fellow Saints to 'leave death entirely out of consideration, and look at men and families as we would ... if there were no death'. 'To contemplate man in his true light, we must, as it were, forget that death is in his path; we must look upon him as an eternal, ever-living being'.<sup>15</sup>

**Theological studies**

The subtleties of such religious views are often enormously complex, they remind me of The Russian Orthodox Archbishop Anthony Bloom who tells how one Soviet art historian analysed the work of the fourteenth-fifteenth century icon painter Andrei Rublev -famed for his piece on the Holy Trinity- and observed that Rublev painted events in time as three-dimensional whilst eternal events were given two dimensions. Bloom admired this analysis for its distinction between time and eternity reflected in the media of thickness and thinness: thick time, thin eternity. Had Bloom been a Mormon bishop that classification would not have appealed at all, I suspect. Such is the

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<sup>15</sup>*Millennial Star* 1845. 5. 12: 189.

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

complexities of comparative classification of things.<sup>16</sup>

So it is, for example, that the paradigmatic scene of the rapture on the one hand, a human context from which some people have simply been abstracted, and the paradigmatic scene of, say, a Latter-day Saint undergoing vicarious baptism or other rites on the other, reveals a marked typological distinctiveness of that kind of evangelicalism and of Mormonism. Each reveals a different Christology at the heart of radically different ecclesiology.

LDS history and its historical theology has, then, known its period of millennial expectation, including equivalent references to being caught up in the skies to meet the coming Lord. But it moved on from there, as the Great Salt Valley replaced the clouds of heaven: Zion was in the hills, an interesting mediation of heaven on earth, and before long its temples would mediate still further. And as their own form of the *axis mundi*, and the gate of heaven, temples became the place where a distinctive core membership could experience and develop forms of spirituality that would render rapture redundant. Here again we can invoke Weber: 'The religious mood is the true instrument of salvation'. And the mood-base of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, centered as it is on the home, ward and temple, and grounded in a receptive piety described above, has no need of a rapture as its instrument of salvation.

### Failure

But there are more complex issues still at work behind a non-rapture turn in Mormonism. One of these takes us back to another perspective on Jesus, or at least of Jesus and his Jewish disciples. Here we recall Orson Whitney's dream as a relevant text as we note, as does the bible itself, the sleeping disciples: 'they could not watch with him one poor hour!' Here we have a transitional motif from our earlier theme of attractive inspiration to a cautionary motif allied with the theme of a potential failure in Jesus' work.

Again a caution is required, for Christian traditions inevitably find any notion of failure in Christ's life deeply problematic, most especially so in those mainstream traditions, such as Catholicism, who see their life and work as a direct continuation of that of Jesus. That tradition's history, especially history read theologically, is deeply pervaded by its Christology and vice versa. The Pope, stands as Christ's vicar on earth, continuing his work. Groups that distance themselves from that unbroken apostolic succession, however, often reveal different dynamics, and this is the case for LDS groups whose signature identity as Restoration movements include the notion of age-long apostasy from the work of Jesus in the first century of this era.

The issue of failure in the LDS context, matching its Christology, is inextricably bonded to the idea of the church as a concrete organisation. The

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<sup>16</sup>Anthony Bloom (1971: 38).

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

issue of failure is a failure to establish an enduring church from the first century to today; a factor that drives the need for the gospel's later restoration. Certainly, this failure cannot result from lapse in faith or morals on Jesus' part, for he was, as LDS theology confesses, entirely obedient, good, indeed sinless. The problem obviously lies in the disobedience and failure of others, not least under the influence of Satan's attritional opposition to the Plan of Salvation.

And here those sleeping disciples offer a paradigmatic scene all of their own. They sleep; this is the sleep of agency, a partial symbol of apostasy. It is a motif entirely reversed in the Book of Mormon where 3 Nephi 19 presents what can be read as a kind of American context in which Jesus repeats aspects of his previous actions with his New Testament disciples. In what is a complex interplay of elements of John's Gospel he commands his Nephite disciples to pray, moves from them several times, but on each return he finds them watching and praying. This prompts him to say that he has never seen such faith, not even among the Jews, i.e. amongst his Jewish disciples (3. Nephi: 35).

It is against that background that we can appreciate the LDS theological dilemma exemplified in James Talmage's question: 'Is the fact of the great apostasy, the virtual overthrow and destruction of the Church established by Jesus Christ, to be regarded as an instance of failure in the Lord's plans? Is it a case of defeat in which Satan was victor over Christ?' His rhetorical response acknowledges that, while the 'ways of Omniscience' are beyond us, world history is replete with 'temporary triumphs of evil' when divine plans seem frustrated and 'God's purposes opposed and their consummation delayed'.<sup>17</sup> The dispersal of Israel, for example, might have been seen as a failure of divine promise but it prepared for the impending gathering of 'Israel'. L. A. Wilson, concurrently, broached this theme when asking how many times the earth may have been 'peopled by the Lord before Adam was placed upon it'; wondering 'whether or not in the vast eternities ... other plans had been tried and found wanting'.<sup>18</sup> Though humans are not given this information, the prophet Joseph does say that God 'worked out His Kingdom with fear and trembling', which Wilson took to 'indicate that He had seen many failures'.<sup>19</sup> Decades earlier this topic was exemplified by Elder D. Tyler's treatment of the Second Coming and the fact that a Kingdom of Jesus had now been 'set up in America'.<sup>20</sup> Jesus would have established a kingdom in his own day if only the Jews had accepted him, but they 'would not receive

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<sup>17</sup>James Talmage (1909: 22).

<sup>18</sup>Kolob, a putative heavenly body and dwelling place 'nigh unto God's throne'. Abraham 3: 9.

<sup>19</sup>L. A. Wilson, (1905: 87, 51).

<sup>20</sup>An early observer, W. H. Dixon, argued that, for LDS, it was 'the advent of the Saints' that 'was the second coming, and the founding of their church the beginning of the reign of God'.(1867:284).

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

that kingdom and acknowledge him as their king'.<sup>21</sup> Jesus sought to inaugurate a kingdom for 'we find him restoring the same order' of 'the Kingdom of God' that had existed in the days of Moses. It possessed 'three inspired men at its head', with one as president over the other two in 'Peter, James and John ... as a First Presidency, and making Peter as a god to the people, by giving him the keys of the kingdom' for things to be 'sealed on earth'.<sup>22</sup>

So it is that within Mormon thought we find explanations of and for apostasy that have some rooting in Christology. But the theological narrative is soon superseded by a greater good in the form of Christ's resurrection, and his appearances to his former disciples, to newly appointed disciples based in America, and to the Lost Tribes of Israel in some hidden place. Moreover, he visited the place of departed spirits heralding his work as their Saviour and validating the future role of Melchizedek priests as Saviours on Mount Zion through their genealogical work and vicarious temple rituals.<sup>23</sup> The very idea of the gospel includes this post-mortem work towards exaltation as well as Christ's pre-mortal act of atonement.

Another element of this issue is found in Parley P. Pratt's suggestion that while Christ had 'fulfilled a few of the prophecies', it would take his Second Coming to fulfil a 'far greater number of predictions'.<sup>24</sup> Here, even though we are directly faced with the fact of partial fulfilment, it seems to be accompanied by some element of failure, even if that 'failure' consists in the incompleteness of a goal: an as yet unachieved *telos*. What this view does is to set Christ's work within the dynamic of future fulfilment through the Restoration of gospel and church. Pratt, and Whitney, too, lived, wrote and spoke after and because of that restoration: and that matters in the framing and explication of failure.

### Evil and failure

In terms of comparative religion, the theme of failure often appears to be only temporary, while awaiting an ultimately beneficial outcome. While possibly

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<sup>21</sup>Matthew 23: 37 being used as a proof text. 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent to thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!'

<sup>22</sup>*Millennial Star* 1854 (16. 35:549).

<sup>23</sup>Spirits are sometimes classified into 'unembodied spirits' that have not yet taken bodies, 'embodied spirits' currently 'dwelling in the flesh', and 'disembodied spirits' after death but awaiting final resurrection. John Morgan (1914: 3).

<sup>24</sup>*Millennial Star* 1840 (1. 2: 28). One potential interpretation of this is to suggest a degree of failure in Christ's first earthly ministry. an issue developed in subsequent chapters.

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

involving a degree of cognitive dissonance<sup>25</sup> the ultimate resolution is rooted in complex human sentiments of desired destiny represented both in Simmel's 'need to find completeness' and Werner Stark's combination of a 'mind craving for meaning and ... heart dreaming of love'.<sup>26</sup> Certainly Orson Whitney's case exemplifies these sentiments. And as he stood on the threshold of his own missionary call his options were clear, the attractive inspiration of Jesus or the sleep of the Jewish disciples. If he was to enter into his LDS parental heritage it would be as the changed man inspired by the Jesus of Gethsemane's atonement, but a man alert to his Saviour's clarity that Orson had also to depend upon himself. And what is more there is no sense of dissonance in that, for him, His path is clear.

Completeness, meaning, and love: such drives generate hope, the prime social sentiment of religion,<sup>27</sup> often through theological structuring or restructuring of history into distinct 'dispensations'. Whether 'failure' is ever built into these interpretations of apparently negative events depends on a group's theology. Within Christendom, for example, the suffering and death of Jesus is given a positive value, being understood as God's will.<sup>28</sup> The Protestant Reformation, arguing against church corruption, presupposed an ecclesial reality capable of re-authentication. Revivalism, too, works on similar assumptions, depending upon a reliable bible and dynamic Holy Spirit to restore a truthful organizational vitality. Leadership figures play their own significant roles in such failure-success metamorphoses, as in Sun Yung Moon and the Unification Church's belief that Jesus failed in aspects of his life-mission but that a new church and leadership now offer positive progress. I have, in this lecture, hardly mentioned Joseph Smith as the leader whose paradigmatic scene in his First Vision serves as the ultimate bridge between the type scene of the pre-mortal council and the Gethsemane Experience of Jesus. He is, of course, radically important, and I have explored his role quite extensively in the new book: *Joseph Smith, Jesus and Satanic Opposition*. The final character in that title I have also left largely unnamed.

### CONCLUSION

In all of these topics I am reminded of the influential twentieth century archbishop of Canterbury, William Temple, who once wrote an essay at school on which a master commented: 'Temple, you are in deep waters here.' To which young William replied, 'Yes sir, but I can swim!' My own swimming competence is very limited, a slow breast-stroke with head seeking not to drown, and that a skill learned half way through my life.

<sup>25</sup>Theories of cognitive dissonance following Leon Festinger (1957) have often been both used and criticized as one explanation of such contexts, not least by theologians, cf. R. Gill (1987: 15, 238-253).

<sup>26</sup>Georg Simmel, G. (1997: 142), Werner Stark, (1969: 38).

<sup>27</sup>Somewhat contrary to Rachel Muers whose excellent essay separates hope from 'optimism on a reading of historical events and trends' (2004:109).

<sup>28</sup>Acts 2:23.

"For social scientific study, though no more than many forms of arts and humanities work engaged with human self-reflection, can bring us not only to a way of seeing, but also of seeing-through, and of learning to live with the new vistas."

### Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:

The waters of social science, as of theology, can be very deep. They remind me of Malinowski's notes on Trobriand Island magic -when fishing in the safe waters inside the lagoon no spells are needed, but once one launches beyond the reef into the wider, unpredictable sea, then spells are required. One is also reminded of the words of that considerable LDS scholar of the sociology of religion and of this Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, Armand Mauss, a friend I mention here with pleasure and thanks for his many kindnesses over the years. Armand commented on intellectual endeavour:

Abandon certainty all ye who enter herein! Never again will you enjoy the immunity to doubt and ambiguity that went with your previous life. But then the ability to live with perpetual ambiguity is also the trait that distinguishes adults from adolescents.<sup>29</sup>

Indeed, the often moody transition from adolescence of thought to some degree of adulthood involves serious change. What is more, the very practice of many disciplines effects its own change and fostering of new moods. We may, for example, recall Levi-Strauss who spoke of anthropological study, most especially the outcome of fieldwork, as an 'inner evolution that will really make him into a new man', through what is, essentially a 'psychological change'.<sup>30</sup> Is, then, the anthropologist as transformed into a 'new man' as much as Whitney was no longer 'the same man again' after his dream? Perhaps so. For social scientific study, though no more than many forms of arts and humanities work engaged with human self-reflection, can bring us not only to a way of seeing, but also of seeing-through, and of learning to live with the new vistas.

Here, I suppose, I rather disagree with the way Glenn Vernon introduced that collection on *Research in Mormonism* with his sure sense that 'by its very nature a social scientific approach is agnostic since it is restricted to the natural and empirical world and consequently cannot reach decisions about the supernatural or super empirical world.'

In one sense, and at the level of basic description and simple analysis he is, of course, correct. But a cumulative engagement with social science, especially of the more interpretative and social constructionist forms, brings us to that kind of reflexivity by which we can see how groups originate and develop, including groups to which we belong and which have contributed so much to our own identity and emotional configurations.

Richard Bushman, another and much respected LDS intellectual and USA historian is of interest here for, amongst other things, his passing comments towards the end of his very brief introduction to *Mormonism*. There he notes

<sup>29</sup>Armand Mauss (1990:9) Cited in Terryl L. Givens (2007: 239).

<sup>30</sup>Claude Levi-Strauss ([1954] 1963:373, 374).

**Davies: Mormon Reflections continued:**

that while 'the church has suffered the loss of many of its educated members' it is a loss probably no greater than that incurred by other churches. In terms of retention of membership, however, he cites LDS communalism, life-discipline, and a cosmic world-view, all sustained within an optimistic activism set amidst a complex comprehensiveness of ideas and activities. His ultimate perspective is grounded in a kind of cost-benefit analysis of centrifugal and centripetal forces in which it is probably better to 'hold on to the faith at the centre' of one's life rather than 'to depart from the Mormon circle' and 'abandon a plenteous and ordered existence for the perplexities and sorrows of modern life'.<sup>31</sup> This popular gloss on community and self-coherence versus anomie is interesting, as is the designation of modern life as perplexing and sorrowful. Here he is, essentially, concerned with mood, and with the positive values of corporate membership: the communal mood that works its own dynamics of salvation.

Just how we engage with all these things remains, of course, a matter of personal reflection, a matter intensifying at different times of life and, probably, also with age. But, enough has been said for one day. In conclusion, then, and recalling Glenn Vernon's work and personal kindness in my own early encouragement, I have presented this lecture not as anything like a return gift of Marcel Mauss's threefold schema but more as a venture in Mauss's 'fourth obligation', and in the sentiments entailed when we look into the sacred secrets of our core value in the pursuit of truth in which our forebears, ourselves, and upcoming generations enjoin. Thank you.

Douglas J. Davies

Department of Theology & Religion  
Durham University

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<sup>31</sup>Richard L. Bushman (2008: 116).

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## MSSA Website

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

The MSSA website is a wonderful resource for students, academics, and anyone interested in the social sciences and Mormonism. You'll find the latest news and announcements about job openings and upcoming conferences, downloadable copies of previous issues of the newsletter, an extensive bibliography, and convenient links to other academic journals and organizations. Other features of the website include:

Contact information  
Online due-paying

"Ask an Expert" archives  
MSSA leadership information

## SSSR/RRA Annual Meeting

October 28-30, 2011

Research in the Scientific  
Study of Religion: from  
the Local to the Cross-  
National

Hyatt Regency  
Milwaukee  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

Each year, the MSSA  
participates in the  
SSSR/RRA conference  
and sponsors various  
sessions throughout the  
weekend.

For more information  
about the conference,  
click [here](#).

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

## Plan

## Upcoming Conferences

### MAY

- 14** EXPOUND Symposium  
-Provo, Utah  
[-http://expoundlds.com/index.html](http://expoundlds.com/index.html)
- 26-29** Mormon History Association: "From Cotton to Cosmopolitan: Local, National, and Global Transformations in Mormon History"  
-St. George, Utah  
[-www.mhahome.org/index.php](http://www.mhahome.org/index.php)

### JUNE

- 21-23** Center for Studies on New Religions: "New Religion in a Globalized East: Taiwan, Southeast Asia, the World"  
-Taipei, Taiwan  
-Co-organized by Aletheia University, ISAR (Institute for the Study of American Religion), and the International Association for the Study of New Religions  
[-www.cesnur.org/2011/dan\\_programme.html](http://www.cesnur.org/2011/dan_programme.html)

### AUGUST

- 3-6** Sunstone Symposium: "Mormon Artifacts and Material Culture"  
-Ogden, Utah (NOTE: CHANGE OF VENUE)  
-Proposals Submission Deadline: May 15, 2011  
[-www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/)
- 4-5** European Mormon Studies Association: "Mormonism and Ritual"  
-Durham University, England  
-Proposals Submission Deadline: May 1, 2011  
[-http://euromormonstudies.wordpress.com/](http://euromormonstudies.wordpress.com/)

### SEPTEMBER

- 8-10** Utah State Historical Society: Utah State History Conference  
-Salt Lake City, Utah  
-Proposals Submission Deadline: June 6, 2011  
[-http://history.utah.gov/historical\\_society/annual\\_meeting](http://history.utah.gov/historical_society/annual_meeting)
- 22-25** John Whitmer Historical Association: "E Unum Pluribus" (Out of One, Many)  
-Nauvoo, Illinois  
[-www.jwha.info/meetings/callforpapers11.asp](http://www.jwha.info/meetings/callforpapers11.asp)
- 29-Oct. 1** Communal Studies Association: "Community in the Margins"  
-Auburn, Kentucky  
[-www.communalstudies.org/annualconference](http://www.communalstudies.org/annualconference)

## Future SSSR/RRA Meetings

2012  
Phoenix, Arizona  
Hyatt Regency Phoenix  
November 9-11

## Upcoming Calls for Papers Deadlines

Submit proposals by:

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### MAY 1

for

European Mormon Studies Association: "Mormonism and Ritual"

to be held August 4-5, 2011  
at Durham University, England

Please send a 200-word abstract to kim.ostman@abo.fi. If accepted, a notification will be given by 15 May 2011. It is expected that final papers will be approximately 3,000-3,500 words, being delivered in a time of 20-25 minutes each.

For more information, visit: <http://euromormonstudies.wordpress.com/>

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### MAY 15

for

Sunstone Symposium: "Mormon Artifacts and Material Culture"

to be held August 3-6, 2011  
in Ogden, Utah

Please send your proposals including: title; 100-word abstract; names, bios, and contact info for presenter(s); list of AV equipment needs; brief summary of the topic's relevance to Mormon studies; and outline or draft if possible to Mary Ellen Robertson, mary.ellen@sunstonemagazine.com.

For more information, visit: [www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/)

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### JUNE 6

for

Utah State Historical Society: Utah State History Conference

to be held September 8-10, 2011  
in Salt Lake City, Utah

Proposals should include a one-page description of the topic and its significance, any audio visual needs, mailing address and telephone number, and a one or two paragraph biography of each participant. Submit proposals to Kent Powell, kpowell@utah.gov.

For more information, visit:

[http://history.utah.gov/historical\\_society/annual\\_meeting/](http://history.utah.gov/historical_society/annual_meeting/)

## More about the 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  
12 Mistral Lane  
Irvine, CA 92617  
mcbride@uci.edu

Visit us online at:  
[www.mormonsocialscience.org](http://www.mormonsocialscience.org)

## New and Recent Publications of Interest

## BOOKS

Douglas J. Davies, *Emotion, Identity, and Religion: Hope, Reciprocity, and Otherness* (Oxford University Press, April 15, 2011).

From Oxford University Press: Deep emotions pervade our human lives and ongoing moods echo them. Religious traditions often shape these and give devotees a sense of identity in a hopeful and meaningful life despite the conflicts, confusion, pain and grief of existence. Driven by anthropological and sociological perspectives, Douglas J. Davies describes and analyses these dynamic tensions and life opportunities as they are worked out in ritual, music, theology, and the allure of sacred places. . .

Drawing from psychological studies of how our thinking processes engage with the worlds around us we see how difficult it is to separate out 'religious' activity from many other aspects of human response to our environment. Throughout these pages many examples are taken from the well-known religions of the world as well as from local and secular traditions.

Terry L. Givens and Matthew J. Grow, *Parley P. Pratt: The Apostle Paul of Mormonism* (Oxford University Press, November 1, 2011).

From Oxford University Press: Tracing the life of this colorful figure from his hardscrabble origins in upstate New York to his murder in 1857, Terry Givens and Matthew Grow explore the crucial role Pratt played in the formation and expansion of early Mormonism. . .

Drawing on letters, journals, and other rich archival sources, Givens and Grow examine not only Pratt's writings but also his complex personal life.

Edwin Goble, *The Nail of Heaven: LDS Cosmology, Metaphysics and Science* (CreateSpace, January 19, 2011).

From the publisher: LDS Author Edwin Goble discusses the issues of Cosmology, Science, the Creation of Man, Symbology, Ritual, Metaphysics, Skepticism versus Faith, and Theism versus Atheism from an LDS worldview.

Cardell Jacobson and Lara Burton, *Modern Polygamy in the United States: Historical, Cultural, and Legal Issues* (Oxford University Press, March 9, 2011).

From Oxford University Press: Though many people around the world are oblivious to it, polygamy continues to be practiced in the United States. The state of Texas drew world-wide attention in 2008, as federal agents surrounded the compound of The Fundamentalist Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (FLDS) and took custody of more than 400 children. . .The state justified the raid by alleging that underage marriage was being forced on young women; however, a year later, all but one of the children had been returned to their parents and only ten men were charged with crimes, some barely related to the original charges. This volume offers valuable insights into the history and culture of the many people, including members of the FLDS, who lead polygamous lives in the United States in the twenty-first century.

We have done our best to include the most relevant recent book and article publications. We apologize if any significant contributions have been overlooked. You're always invited to email any announcements regarding new publications to Rene (reneromig@gmail.com) or Bosco (boscoocsob@gmail.com).

## New and Recent Publications of Interest

### JOURNAL ARTICLES

Various academic journals deal exclusively with topics relating to Mormonism, and are always good places to look for relevant articles. A partial list of these journals is below.

The individual articles we have selected to highlight here are found in other academic journals that do not limit their inclusions to Mormon-related topics.

Matthew Bowman, "Matthew Philip Gill and Joseph Smith: The Dynamics of Mormon Schism," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* Vol. 14, No. 3 (February 2011): 42-63.

Amy Hoyt and Sara M. Patterson, "Mormon Masculinity: Changing Gender Expectations in the Era of Transition from Polygamy to Monogamy, 1890-1920," *Gender & History* Vol. 23, Issue 1 (April 2011): 72-91.

G. E. Kawika Allen and P. Paul Heppner, "Religiosity, Coping, and Psychological Well-being Among Latter-Day Saint Polynesians in the US," *Asian American Journal of Psychology* Vol. 2, No. 1 (March 2011): 13-24.

Patrick Q. Mason, "God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," *Journal of Church and State*, Advance Access published January 28, 2011, doi:10.1093/jcs/csq135.

Philip B. Mason, Michael B. Toney and Youngtae Cho, "Religious Affiliation and Hispanic health in Utah," *The Social Science Journal* Vol. 48, Issue 1 (January 2011): 175-92.

### Mormon Studies academic journals

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| -AML Annual                                 | -BYU Studies                                    |
| -Dialogue                                   | -Claremont Journal of Mormon Studies            |
| -Element                                    | -FARMS Review                                   |
| -International Journal<br>of Mormon Studies | -Irreantum                                      |
| -Issues in Religion and<br>Psychotherapy    | -John Whitmer Historical<br>Association Journal |
| -Journal of Book of<br>Mormon Studies       | -Journal of Mormon History                      |
| -Mormon Historical Studies                  | -Mormon Review                                  |
| -Restoration Studies                        | -Sunstone                                       |

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

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## Bulletin Board

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

### News

PATRICK MASON was recently appointed to the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at the School of Religion, Claremont Graduate University. He succeeds Richard Bushman in this position.

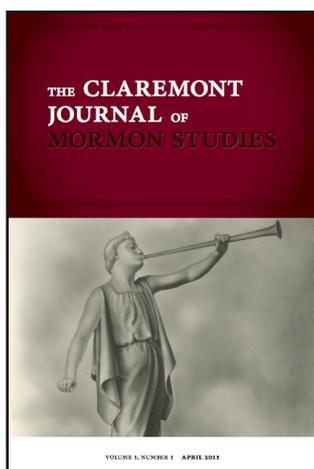
From Claremont Graduate University's [website](#): Professor Mason is currently Research Associate Professor and Associate Director for Research, Contending Modernities Project, at the Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame. He also taught at the American University in Cairo for three years. He received the BA in history from Brigham Young University and both the MA and Ph.D. in history from the University of Notre Dame, where he also received the MA in International Peace Studies. He has published numerous articles on Nineteenth Century American religious history, on Mormonism, African American Religion, and religion and politics. His book, The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South, has just been published by Oxford University Press. The School of Religion is looking forward with great excitement to many years of his productive presence as a teacher and scholar. Professor Mason will be joining the faculty in early August.

In response to readers' questions on the blog *Juvenile Instructor*, Patrick Mason writes about his experiences as a young scholar attempting to merge an interest in Mormon studies with a fruitful career in the larger world of American religious history. He also shares his hopes for the Claremont Mormon studies program and some of his current academic endeavors. Read the article [here](#).

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CLAREMONT GRADUATE UNIVERSITY'S SCHOOL OF RELIGION has created a new publication in the field of Mormon studies: the online, student-run Claremont Journal of Mormon Studies. The inaugural issue of this new academic journal has been published and is available for viewing [here](#).

From the Journal's [website](#): The Claremont Journal of Mormon Studies is a student-run online reviewed academic journal committed to the advancement of the field of Mormon studies and produced by the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association in Claremont, California. Through high quality articles and reviews the journal explores Mormon studies through the work of qualified graduate students pursuing Mormon studies through a wide range of fields and disciplines. The journal particularly encourages students to submit Mormon studies-related papers completed during the course of class work in graduate school. The purpose of this journal is to establish a proficient and easily accessible forum for ongoing research in Mormon studies by qualified graduate students, exemplifying new research being done in various fields.



## Bulletin Board

### Announcements

#### MSSA Dues

Please send your dues for 2011 to:

Michael McBride  
12 Mistral Lane  
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

MICHAEL NIELSEN has been appointed Chair of Psychology at Georgia Southern University.

SHERRY BAKER writes: The Mormon Media Studies Interest Group consists of about 60 people (mostly Mormon, mostly academics) from around the country. We post items of interest that relate to Mormons and the media through an email listserv. We also use the list to discuss current events relating to Mormons and the media, and to share information relating to research questions on the topic. The list is open to all who might want to join. Send an email stating your interest in joining the group to: [sherry\\_baker@byu.edu](mailto:sherry_baker@byu.edu).

We started the list in 2009. This led to the first ever Mormon Media Studies Symposium, which was held at BYU in November 2010 (<http://ce.byu.edu/cw/mmstudies/papers.cfm>). The next MMS Symposium will be held in November 2012.

VIDEOS OF PRESENTATIONS from Claremont Graduate University's recent conference, "War and Peace in Our Times: Mormon Perspectives," held March 18-19, are available [here](#).

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## MSSA 2011 Elections

Once again, it is time for Mormon Social Science Association elections!

The positions that are up for re-election are:

### President

-This individual will serve as President-Elect under Henri Gooren.

### Two Board Members-at-Large

-The two new members of the Board will replace Matt Bahr and Melvyn Hammarberg.

Please send your nominations for candidates to President Ryan Cragun ([ryantcragun@gmail.com](mailto:ryantcragun@gmail.com)).

 Elections will be held June 15, 2011. 