



Mormon Social Science Association

...bringing social science to Mormonism

Spring 2012 Newsletter, Volume 32, Issue 1

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President's Message

Editorial for April MSSA Newsletter

Henri Gooren, Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan - March 9, 2012

Extensive email exchanges helped prepare several MSSA-sponsored sessions at the upcoming SSSR meeting in Phoenix, Arizona (November 9-11). Although I've heard some (non-MSSA) people complain about the location choice, I would like to urge you all to participate (and present, if so inclined). SSSR's stated topic this year is Religion, Race, and National Identity and that is surely not a coincidence! (As an anthropologist, however, I would have preferred the term "ethnicity" instead of race.) As the Call for Papers rightly notices, Arizona "has been at the center of several religio-political controversies. As a result, Phoenix is a setting in which we can confront the relations between religion, race, and national identity with the perspectives of social science."

That rings true and we might even engage in interesting discussions with local inhabitants.

We're hoping to tempt many of our members, whether based in Utah or elsewhere, into participation by organizing an MSSA session on Armand Mauss's memoirs (to be published in October by the University of Utah Press) and another session on how international Mormons are dealing with the increased media attention on Mormonism thanks to Romney's campaign.

There are also plans for a comparative session on LDS, Adventists, and Witnesses. MSSA attendance was lower at the last two meetings in Baltimore and Milwaukee. I'm optimistic that this year's location and sessions will entice more members to attend.

I just started my two-year term as your new MSSA president and was fortunate to spend a few days in Utah in late February. I gave a lecture on conversion at BYU's Department of Counseling Psychology and Special Education and a lecture on LDS and Protestant growth patterns in Latin America at the LDS Research Information Division in Salt Lake City. I enjoyed excellent discussions and received valuable feedback to get these talks published (eventually). I also saw many old friends again - including quite a few MSSA members!

During my visit, the speed of the social and economic changes in Utah amazed me. The LDS Church is pouring two billion dollars into upgrading the downtown area in Salt Lake, building apartments and a huge new mall.

Construction activities and road work were apparent everywhere in the Salt Lake and Provo areas, and traffic was much worse than during my last visit in

President's Message continued:

2008. The booming construction sector (and Utah's booming economy) helped the Latino population to explode. I talked to Mexicans everywhere and good Mexican food was in abundant supply!

While the Anglo Utahns overwhelmingly support Romney, his stance on immigration is now more conservative than that of the LDS Church. Several Latino initiatives criticized Romney's past record on immigration and even his leadership skills. One such initiative even used the Book of Mormon to make the case that Latinos have a special place in the LDS Church and hence privileged leadership qualifications. There are now more Latinos than ever before in the First Quorum of the Seventy, but not as yet on the Quorum of the Twelve. The next pope may well be a Latin American, but the LDS President won't be for decades to come. If ever.

Ponder

FEATURE ARTICLE

What's the Mormon Take on That?

Patrick Q. Mason

Claremont Graduate University

When I went to graduate school in the late 1990s, I made a point of not specializing in Mormon studies, for all the obvious reasons: I didn't want to be pigeonholed; I didn't want to "get in trouble" with the church; and most of all, I wanted an academic job. I didn't overtly try to hide my Mormon identity, but I saw it as largely irrelevant to what I was there to do: to get an education and become a specialist in American religious history. Most of my early coursework was focused on African American religion and American evangelicalism and fundamentalism. Even in a program that specialized in American religion, we never had a single class completely dedicated to Mormonism—the closest we came was reading Nathan Hatch's excellent study, *The Democratization of American Christianity*, in which Mormonism is examined alongside Methodists, black Christians, and the Campbell-Stone Christian movement. The only Richard Bushman we read was his early Bancroft Prize-winning book *From Puritan to Yankee*; we didn't read Jan Shipps, Armand Mauss, or any other leading Mormon studies scholars.

Yet Mormonism, and eventually Mormon studies, proved tough to shake. The fact that I came from BYU was a give-away; another LDS member of my cohort who came from UC-Davis was able to "pass" a bit more easily, though he too was soon found out. This made us marked men. One of my professors, a former Catholic priest, insisted that we had something "Mormon" to say about everything we read or talked about in class.

"It wasn't quite with kicking and screaming, but I ended up as what I never intended to be: a Mormon studies scholar."

Mason, "What's The Mormon Take On That?" continued:

"What's the Mormon take on that?," he would grumble every week. This was particularly awkward when discussing the Great Awakening or other religious movements that, we had to remind him, predated the birth of Joseph Smith.

Other Mormons would follow in the program, but we were the first two, which made us something like lab rats. (We still muse that we must have been admitted to the program as a kind of social experiment.) We diligently did our work, almost always on non-Mormon topics, but there was still a sense that our professors didn't quite know what to think of us. Overall, however, the experience was almost entirely benign.

After completing master's degrees in history and then international peace studies, I had the daunting task that faces all doctoral students of deciding on a dissertation topic. I had a few ideas swirling around, nothing definite. The one thing I knew I did not want to do was a Mormon project, for all the aforementioned reasons. I finally settled on religious violence in the late nineteenth-century South. My great-grandparents had joined the church in Mississippi around the turn of the twentieth century; family lore had it that they were baptized in the middle of the night for fear of mobs and then hopped on a boxcar to Idaho to flee the wrath to come. (Alas, a bit of historical research sapped a bit of the color and drama out of the actual story—facts can be a real drag.) I couldn't find any scholarly literature focusing on anti-Mormonism in the postbellum South, and I intuited that I might find something there, so I threw in the Mormons alongside Catholics, Jews, and black Christians as subjects of my study, figuring that Mormons would be the least important and least interesting part of the narrative.

My research took me to most major (and many minor) archives in the South, along with plenty of Motel 6's and Waffle Houses. In the end I was shocked to discover that the number of violent anti-Mormon incidents in the late nineteenth-century South far outpaced anti-Catholic and anti-Jewish violence combined. (Of course, white terrorist violence against African Americans was in a whole different category, both quantitatively and qualitatively.) All of a sudden, and partly to my horror, I had two long chapters on Mormons and one chapter on each of the other groups in my study. This was—gasp—becoming a Mormon project! After I completed the dissertation and considered how to reshape it into a book, I faced two options, with two very different possible resulting books: one would be to keep the comparative focus and try to beef up the other case studies so as to match the richness and depth of the Mormon material; the other would be to just go with where the evidence led, and let anti-Mormonism dominate the narrative. Almost ten years after I had started graduate school with the intention of not focusing my scholarship on Mormonism, I took the second option, which led me to conduct further research and add to the Mormon material in the dissertation. The final result was my monograph, *The Mormon Menace: Violence and Anti-Mormonism in the Postbellum South*. It wasn't quite with kicking and screaming, but I ended up as what I never

Mason, "What's The Mormon Take On That?" continued:

intended to be: a Mormon studies scholar.

My professor's question in that first semester of graduate coursework—"What's the Mormon take on that?"—has stayed with me. It's a question I reflect on often in my current position at Claremont Graduate University, where we have the world's only graduate-level Mormon Studies program. Some have questioned the wisdom or appropriateness of sponsoring a Mormon Studies program at a major university. After all, they ask, isn't that just reinforcing a denominational model of religion scholarship that is reflective more of the nineteenth than the twenty-first century? Or, they might ask, why have Mormon Studies when the same institution would not host a Methodist Studies or Jehovah's Witness Studies or Scientology Studies program? These are excellent questions that deserve discussion. I believe that compelling answers can be given to them, and CGU has its own internal reasons for pursuing a Mormon Studies program (alongside, I should note, Coptic Studies and Zoroastrian Studies and Islamic Studies and others). I won't elaborate on those questions and answers here, but I do want to think about what it is we're doing in Mormon Studies, both at Claremont and more broadly. This isn't meant to be a manifesto, nor is it entirely original—plenty of other folks have offered thoughtful reflections on the matter. These are simply a few observations about where we are and where we might go.

One approach to Mormon studies is what we might call, perhaps too flippantly, Mormon studies for Mormons. I would argue that if we were to tally all the work that has been done that might recognizably be called Mormon studies, this category would far and away have the most entries. This is real scholarship—by that I mean that it is informed by methods, theories, and disciplines that would be recognizable to other (non-Mormon) professional scholars, and it conforms to the same standards of fairness, fidelity to evidence, and impartiality that are widely valued in academia. By and large Mormons—mostly with a personal devotional commitment to the LDS Church—have produced this scholarship. Although they might like to think that their work will occasionally be read and referenced by non-Mormon scholars, the fact is that the primary audience is fellow Mormons (often other Mormon scholars, sometimes the general laity). Their subjects of study are seen as having intrinsic value within the community but are typically considered by those on the outside to be arcane, esoteric, or largely irrelevant to broader discussions. It is not necessarily because the topics are necessarily uninteresting to those on the outside, but the framing of the issues is such that it would not necessarily be clear to outsiders why they should care. Much of the fine scholarship produced under the aegis of the "new Mormon history" falls in this category, as does much of the work that continues to appear in Mormon-specific conferences (MHA, AML, Sunstone) and publications (BYU Studies, Dialogue, Journal of Mormon History, etc.). Again, I should emphasize that much of this is truly excellent scholarship—the fact that it is produced primarily by and for insiders is not in itself a handicap to quality so

"...every subfield within every discipline, as well as every 'X studies' field. . .often struggles to find ways to convince people outside the discipline or identity group that their scholarship 'matters' beyond the boundaries of self-definition."

Mason, "What's The Mormon Take On That?" continued:

much as it simply produces a limited audience.

This phenomenon is hardly limited to Mormon scholarship, of course—every subfield within every discipline, as well as every “X studies” field (women’s studies, Middle Eastern studies, queer studies, etc.), often struggles to find ways to convince people outside the discipline or identity group that their scholarship “matters” beyond the boundaries of self-definition. This does not prevent scholars within those fields from producing good work—to the contrary, high-quality research and writing and publishing churns on, often in journals and presses specifically tailored to the internal dialogue. Outsiders who do choose to venture in are often bewildered—first, by the volume of quality scholarship that they had no idea existed, then second, by the challenge of how to begin to make sense of it all. I got a taste of this when for my dissertation I delved into the world of southern Jewish history. There is, I learned, an active Southern Jewish Historical Association with its own journal and annual conference. I attended the conference, which was held in a historic synagogue in Charleston, South Carolina, and was delighted by the combination of professional scholars, amateur enthusiasts, and ordinary members of the community who were simply there to learn and enjoy. I got to know some of the scholars in the field, both through their published work and then in person, and was thoroughly impressed. But with the field being delimited not only in terms of faith tradition but also region, it was a limited conversation, and for the most part it was the same small cadre of scholars talking to each other. The circle of Mormon studies scholarship is wider than southern Jewish history, but this phenomenon tracks with what I mean by Mormon studies for Mormons.

Another approach to Mormon studies, one that is newer and includes far fewer titles, is primarily concerned with making connections between Mormonism and broader themes, theories, and narratives such that scholars in other fields (beyond Mormon studies) take notice. This is not just a matter of importing outside ideas and applying them to the study of Mormonism.

Rather, these works of scholarship use Mormonism to tell us something new about the “big picture” (whether it be American history, or constructions of race and ethnicity, or the sociology of religion, or the concept of religion itself) that the community of scholars would not or had not observed otherwise. It is no surprise that the relatively small number of non-Mormons who work in the field of Mormon studies have typically operated in this mode. Indeed, two paragons of this model of Mormon studies scholarship are both by non-Mormons: *Mormonism*, by Jan Shipps; and *The Mormon Question*, by Sarah Barringer Gordon. (Personally, I would contend that these are two of the premier books in Mormon studies, period.)

This is not to say that self-identified Latter-day Saints cannot write in this vein. Armand Mauss’s classic sociological study, *The Angel and the Beehive*, fits

(CONTINUED ON PAGE 9)

Ask An Expert

MSSA's "Ask an Expert" feature quickly connects students, researchers, and scholars to the MSSA's collective body of knowledge. Questions submitted via listserv usually receive a variety of responses within a few days. The varied and helpful responses MSSA members offer demonstrate the MSSA's true commitment to careful research and detailed exploration of questions of all types.

The MSSA invites anyone with a question relating to the social sciences and Mormonism to submit it to Ryan Cragun (ryanrcragun@gmail.com), who will forward the inquiry to the MSSA membership.

Previous "Ask an Expert" topics are archived on the MSSA's [website](#).

Here, we reproduce the following question, originally submitted on January 19th, 2012, and its subsequent responses as an example of the highly effective "Ask an Expert" feature.

Q: What percentage of Mormons regularly participate in temple worship?

Q: I am wondering – do you have any figures (or educated estimates) on the percent of Mormons who attend temple regularly?

A: Several members of the MSSA responded to this question.

Rick Phillips noted that the [Encyclopedia of Mormonism entry on “Vital Statistics” of Mormons written by MSSA member Tim Heaton](#) contains some related information. The information comes from the section on Marriage Rates and Household Composition. Here are the relevant passages:

In the United States in the late twentieth century, LDS members have higher rates of marriage and lower rates of marital dissolution than the national population (see Divorce; Marriage). Marriage patterns vary in different areas of the Church (Fig. 15). Marriages performed in LDS temples are the LDS ideal. The percentage of adults in a temple marriage varies from about 45 percent in Utah to less than 2 percent in Mexico and Central America. Temple marriage is relatively common among Latter-day Saints throughout the United States and Canada but is relatively rare in other areas of the world. Marriage outside the temple is about as frequent as temple marriage and is the most common form of marriage outside the United States and Canada. In some areas, a significant minority of marriages involve one partner who is LDS and another who is not. These interfaith marriages involve only about 5 percent of the membership in Utah, Mexico, and Central America, but reach nearly 20 percent in other parts of the United States and in Canada. There are more than twice as many LDS women as LDS men married to spouses of another faith.... The distribution of households does not fit any uniform pattern across

"Ask an Expert" continued:

countries. The idealized vision of a family with a husband and wife married in the temple and children present describes only one out of five LDS families in the United States and less than 3 percent of LDS families in Japan.

Based on the above information, it is highly unlikely that the percentage of Mormons who regularly participate in temple worship could be above 50% and is likely somewhat below 50%.

David Stewart offered the following response:

The recent Pew Research Center study ("[Mormons in America,](#)" [12 January 2012](#)) surveyed 1,019 Mormon adults in the US by phone. Their methodology involved "oversampling of certain regions of the country where Mormons are most numerous" (p. 67). The authors also note that sampling was not random and involved re-contacting Mormons identified on prior Pew surveys (p.67) to better represent LDS populations in areas where Latter-day Saints constitute a small minority. The Pew study found that 65% of Mormon adults surveyed claimed to hold a current temple recommend. However, this result must be interpreted with several important caveats:

1. Religious affiliation was based on self-identified religious preference rather than on a statistical sampling of church membership records. The Pew study misses individuals who no longer consider themselves Mormons but are still counted as members by the LDS Church. The results are relevant for self-identified Mormons, but cannot be extrapolated to overall membership figures, which include large numbers of disaffiliated individuals who no longer identify the LDS Church as their faith of preference.

2. LDS member activity rates in North America are known to be in the 40-50% range, with many semi-actives included in that figure (see [here](#)), whereas 77% of Mormon respondents on the Pew survey claim to attend church at least once weekly. Again, the Pew study heavily oversamples the most active Mormons while undersampling less-active or disaffiliated members (precisely because such individuals are less likely to identify themselves as Mormons).

3. Prior Pew studies, which served as a basis for re-contacting prior Mormon respondents, have demonstrated a skew not representative of the overall LDS population as claimed on church records. For instance, the [2008 Pew Forum Religious Landscape Study](#) reported that only 23.5% of self-identified US Mormons were converts, whereas cumulative demographic data, birth rates, and historical convert baptism rates all suggest that converts should comprise at least 50% of North American LDS membership. This discrepancy correlates with other data suggesting that at least half of North American converts have become disaffiliated. I have dealt with several additional methodological issues with prior Pew survey [here](#). Another way to look at these sampling issues is to observe that in contrast to traditions such as Catholicism where individuals may strongly identify with the faith without actively participating, LDS membership is more polarized between active members who identify themselves as Mormons and non-participating

"Ask an Expert" continued:

members who no longer consider the LDS Church their faith of preference, with only a relatively narrow stratum (primarily in the "Mormon Cultural Region") of individuals who identify themselves as Mormons but do not regularly participate.

4. Self-reported data among US Christians has widely been found to over-report perceived desirable religious behaviors on matters such as church attendance (38-44% of Americans claim to attend church weekly but only about half are actually there) and tithing (nearly three times as many American Christians claim to tithe as actually do so; see [here](#)). It is a bit of a running joke, and not without evidence, to state that when people tell you how much they drink or smoke, you double it; when people tell you how much they go to church, you cut it in half. While one hopes that Latter-day Saints may be more candid in self-reporting their behaviors than their neighbors of other faiths, it seems unlikely that studies of Mormons are totally exempt from the over-reporting of religious behaviors. Indeed, the same current Pew study that claims that 65% of Mormon adults hold a temple recommend also found that 79% of Mormons claim to pay a full tithe and only 1% are partial tithe payers (Pew p.39). I do not believe that this finding is likely to be considered credible by anyone who has served in a LDS bishopric or as a ward clerk.

5. The study only refers to US Mormons. International LDS members demonstrate significantly lower overall participation and temple attendance rates than US members (references above); US data cannot be extrapolated to the worldwide church.

So how many Mormons attend the temple regularly? The LDS Church does not release specific data, but what we know about activity rates and member participation can reasonably suggest upper and lower brackets. With LDS activity at about 40-50% in North America and 65% of self-identified Mormons claiming to have a temple recommend (remembering that most non-participating Mormons do not identify themselves as Mormons, and that perceived desirable religious behaviors seem to be significantly exaggerated), it is difficult for me to see a figure above one-third of LDS adults holding an active temple recommend as realistic, and the actual the number may be slightly less. It is also generally known that only some fraction of recommend holders attend regularly (anecdotally perhaps one third or fourth, although I have no certain idea). Overall international rates are likely to be not more than half of U.S. rates, given the preponderance of LDS membership in nations with relatively low activity rates (detailed country reports [here](#)).

Armand Mauss wrote in response to this question as well, noting:

I have no systematic data on this subject. However, during the past two decades I have had callings in several western wards that have permitted me to know how many ward members held recommends, and I have compared notes with friends in other wards having similar first-hand knowledge. From these experiences, I would say that the proportion of LDS adults holding

"Ask an Expert" continued:

temple recommends is closer to 1/3 than to 2/3, at least in the American west.

Finally, Cardell Jacobson wrote a response as well:

I would just point out that there is a great deal of variation within the United States. The core of the LDS Church, of course, remains along the Wasatch front (in Utah), but also parts of Arizona, Idaho, Alberta, and some areas of California. In other areas, the numbers of temple recommend holders, tithe-payers, attenders, etc. are far less than in the core.

Based on the above information, it seems likely that the highest rates of temple attendance among Mormons are in the Mormon heartland - the Wasatch Front and other parts of the Intermountain West. The percentage of Mormons who regularly participate in temple worship in that Mormon heartland is unlikely to be as high as the percentage noted in the 2012 Pew Survey - 65%. Given the methodology of the survey, that number appears to reflect the behaviors of highly engaged Mormons. The other data provided above suggest that the real number is much lower than the Pew number, perhaps as few as 25% in the U.S. and much lower outside the U.S., but an exact number isn't known.

Feature Article

(continued from page 5)

here. More and more, this is the mode in which I think the current generation of younger Mormon studies scholars is striving to operate.

Certainly that was the case for my book. Although I hoped it would appeal to both Mormon and non-Mormon audiences, I consciously tried to craft it more for historians of the American South and American religion, and scholars of comparative religious violence, than for the Mormon history crowd per se. (I'm pleased that so far it has received positive attention in these circles and is being adopted in American religion courses.) Of course, the fact is that except for the occasional trade press book like Matt Bowman's *The Mormon People* or (dare I say) Jon Krakauer's *Under the Banner of Heaven*, most of the readership even for these outwardly oriented books remains Mormon. Regardless of sales, this offers a different model of Mormon studies, one that I find attractive. It will certainly be the mode in which I work as I write my next book, a biography of Ezra Taft Benson.

Indeed, my very choice of topic was largely predicated on the question, "What Mormon subject can I study that has clear relevance—and what's more, real significance—beyond the confines of Mormonism?"

The third approach to Mormon studies in my crude tripartite typology is to follow the question of my old graduate school professor—"What's the Mormon take on that?"—and make Mormonism not the subject of study but rather the lens through which other topics are understood, assessed, and

"I would contend that one of the casualties of the twentieth-century Mormon accommodation to American society was the loss of a distinctive Mormon worldview. . ."

analyzed. We have had a few significant gestures in this direction, from thinkers such as Hugh Nibley and Eugene England, but for the most part this model is underdeveloped, though I believe it has real promise. In reflecting on this, I am thinking along the lines of historian Mark Noll's classic statement—one of the great opening lines of a book—"The scandal of the evangelical mind is that there is not much of an evangelical mind." Noll went on to stick the pin half-way back into the grenade by acknowledging that of course there are plenty of highly intelligent evangelicals, but he claimed that "modern evangelicals have not pursued comprehensive thinking under God or sought a mind shaped to its furthest reaches by Christian perspectives."

What he pined for, nearly twenty years ago, was greater "effort to think like a Christian—to think within a specifically Christian framework—across the whole spectrum of modern learning, including economics and political science, literary criticism and imaginative writing, historical inquiry and philosophical studies, linguistics and the history of science, social theory and the arts."¹

I would contend that one of the casualties of the twentieth-century Mormon accommodation to American society was the loss of a distinctive Mormon worldview—or in Noll's terminology, a Mormon mind. No doubt, Mormonism retains a distinctive theology, ecclesiology, and (to at least some degree) culture. But beyond doctrinal matters, can we articulate a comprehensive Mormon worldview that encompasses, as Noll wrote (and Brigham Young could just as easily have said) "the whole spectrum of modern learning"? The church father Tertullian famously quipped, "What hath Athens to do with Jerusalem?" We can turn the question around, and modernize it, by asking, "What hath Salt Lake City to do with Washington (or Wall Street, or Harvard)?" By this I do not mean simply inserting ourselves in the modern political, economic, cultural, and intellectual landscape—certainly individual Mormons have had successful careers in all these areas. Yet I would argue that it is precisely because of the way that Mormons have inserted themselves into the culture that they have, to a large part, become swallowed up by it.

Look no further than national politics: Mitt Romney and Harry Reid, for all their partisan differences, share the position that their Mormonism has nothing to do with their politics. That is the very definition of a differentiated worldview, or Charles Taylor's definition of secularism, in which religion simply becomes one option among many. Both Reid and Romney would probably say that Mormonism is "not just a Sunday religion." But, to my knowledge, neither has systematically worked out how their Mormonism informs their politics, and both have made statements directly denying that it does. Indeed, the very fact that Mormons can comfortably claim positions on all (responsible) sides of the ideological spectrum suggests that they, as a

¹Mark A. Noll, *The Scandal of the Evangelical Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1994), 3-4. Noll offers updated reflections on the topic in *Jesus Christ and the Life of the Mind* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2011).

"It's astounding to think about how far Mormon studies has come in the past three decades... Mormon studies can only stand to be strengthened as its practitioners build competence and confidence in disciplines other than history. "

Mason, "What's The Mormon Take On That?" continued:

group, have not brought their Mormonism to realign the spectrum, but rather largely conform to preexisting options that are generally crafted by non-Mormons. One of the broad trends in modern American religion, as observed by scholars such as Robert Wuthnow, is that political and cultural ideology are driving religious worldviews, rather than the other way around. Mormons are not impervious to this trend.

This is not to suggest that Mormons should retreat from pluralism or from direct and open engagement with the surrounding world. From a historical and sociological perspective, the twentieth-century accommodation with the broader society is neither intrinsically right or wrong, but rather an interesting set of developments that entailed both certain gains and losses for the community. In terms of relative growth and respectability, it's hard to argue with the trajectory. But what I believe we could use more of—what this third approach to Mormon studies would entail—is asking the question “What’s the Mormon take on that?” of politics, economics, gender, race, national security, the arts, psychology, engineering and the hard sciences, technology, and philosophy. There is some movement here on the Mormon blogs, and encouraging developments among a small but growing number of Mormon philosophers and theologians, as well as glimpses in places like Dialogue. I hope to move in this direction with my “other next project,” a co-authored book (with David Pulsipher, of BYU-Idaho) seeking to develop a Mormon theology and ethic of peace. To some degree this project of developing a comprehensive Mormon mind will be easier in the humanities and the social sciences than in other disciplines: what hath Mormonism to do with metallurgy? I don’t know what the answer to that question might possibly be—but if we’re not asking the question, it reveals a certain poverty in the way we think about Mormon studies, and handicaps the capaciousness and potential of Mormonism as an all-encompassing worldview.

It’s astounding to think about how far Mormon studies has come in the past three decades. I can’t wait to see where the next generation of scholarship will go, and I feel privileged to be part of it in both my research and teaching. Already it is impossible to keep up with all the scholarship being produced, let alone the conferences and other events. Mormon studies can only stand to be strengthened as its practitioners build competence and confidence in disciplines other than history. As more scholars across the disciplines—including the social sciences—become engaged in all three approaches to Mormon studies scholarship I have outlined here, the field will continue to mature. Perhaps we’ll even get to the point that when professors ask “What’s the Mormon take on that?” in regard to subjects other than Mormonism, students will have an answer for them.

Plan

Upcoming Conferences

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

MARCH

- 29- Mormon Studies Conference: "Mormonism and the Internet:
30 Negotiating Religious Community and Identity in the Virtual World"
-Orem, Utah
[-www.uvu.edu/religiousstudies/mormonismandtheinternet/](http://www.uvu.edu/religiousstudies/mormonismandtheinternet/)

APRIL

- 6 Mormon Transhumanist Association Conference
-Salt Lake City, Utah
[-http://news.transfigurism.org/2012/03/schedule-for-mormon-transhumanist.html](http://news.transfigurism.org/2012/03/schedule-for-mormon-transhumanist.html)
- 13- Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association: "Laying Up
14 Treasure: Mormons in the Marketplace"
-Claremont, California
[-www.claremontmormonstudies.org/conferences/index.html](http://www.claremontmormonstudies.org/conferences/index.html)
- 13- Restoration Studies Symposium/Sunstone Midwest: "American
15 Restorationism"
-Independence, Missouri
[-www.jwha.info/meetings](http://www.jwha.info/meetings)

MAY

- 18- Mormon Scholars in the Humanities: "Economies and Humanities"
19 -Buena Vista, Virginia
[-www.mormonscholars.net/conferences](http://www.mormonscholars.net/conferences)

JUNE

- 28- Mormon History Association
July 1 -Calgary, Alberta, Canada
[-www.mormonhistoryassociation.org/conferences/](http://www.mormonhistoryassociation.org/conferences/)

JUNE

- 25- Sunstone Symposium: "Mormons and Mormonism as a Political
28 Force"
-Salt Lake City, Utah
[-www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/](http://www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/)

Upcoming Calls for Papers Deadlines

Submit proposals by:

MSSA Dues

Please send your dues for 2012 to:

Ryan T. Cragun
University of Tampa
401 W Kennedy Blvd.
Tampa, FL 33606

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:
ryantrcragun@gmail.com

MARCH 31

for

Society for the Scientific Study of Religion: "Religion, Race, and National Identity"

to be held November 9-11, 2012
in Phoenix, Arizona

All session and paper proposals must be submitted via the on-line submission system that will be available on the SSSR's web site, beginning February 1, 2012. In addition to the session proposer's full contact information, a session proposal requires a session title and an abstract of not more than 150 words describing the goal of the session and how the proposer expects the session to contribute to scientific knowledge about religion. Paper proposals require the name(s) of the author(s), first author's full contact information, an abstract of not more than 150 words that succinctly describes the question(s) motivating the research, the data and methods used, and what the paper contributes or expects to contribute to the knowledge or understanding of religion.

For more information, visit: www.sssrweb.org.

APRIL 2

for

Sunstone Symposium: "Mormons and Mormonism as a Political Force"

to be held July 25-28, 2012
in Salt Lake City, Utah

All proposals must include: session title, one-hundred word abstract, names, brief bios or vitas, and contact information for all presenters, a list of A/V equipment needed, a brief summary of the topic's relevance to Mormon Studies, and a topic outline or draft if possible. Submit proposals to Symposium Director Mary Ellen Robertson at sunstoneme@gmail.com.

For more information, visit: www.sunstonemagazine.com/symposium/

Future SSSR/RRA Meetings

2012

Phoenix, Arizona
Hyatt Regency Phoenix
November 9-11

2013

Boston, Massachusetts
Boston Westin
Waterfront
November 8-10

2014

Indianapolis, Indiana
JW Marriott Indianapolis
Oct. 31-Nov. 2

For information about registration for the 2012 SSSR/RRA annual meeting, please visit www.sssrweb.org. Here, you will find details on location, cost, special events, and instructions for registering online.

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

Upcoming Calls for Papers Deadlines

Submit proposals by:

JULY 9

for

Mormon Media Studies Symposium: "Mormon Moment(s) and the Media"

to be held November 8-9, 2012
in Provo, Utah

Academics, practitioners, and students are invited to submit competitive papers or panel proposals about any aspect of Mormons and the media. Papers and panels may be broadly interdisciplinary; international perspectives are encouraged; all rigorous scholarly methodological frameworks and theories are welcome. Submissions (which will be peer-reviewed) should be either full papers (preferred) (approx. 6,000–8,000 words, with 100 word abstract); or extended abstracts (approx. 500 words). Panel proposals must include the following for all panel participants: name, title, expertise on the topic, and short abstract re planned remarks. For all submissions, include in cover letter title, author's (or panel organizer's) full name & title, and full contact information. Identifying information should appear only on the cover page. Proposals to make audio and/or visual presentations (incl. short films) are welcome (must include rigorous analysis). Papers recently presented or published elsewhere may be considered (provide details.)

For more information, visit: <http://ce.byu.edu/cw/mmstudies/>

SEPTEMBER 15

for

International Conference on Mormonism: "The Evolution of Mormonism From Sect to Church and From Church to Sects"

to be held December 6-7, 2012
at University of Bordeaux, France

Send a 20-line abstract and a short biography to bcillard@numericable.fr.

For more information, visit:

www.religiousstudiesproject.com/2012/02/05/485/

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

New and Recent Publications of Interest

BOOKS

Janet Bennion, [Polygamy in Primetime: Media, Gender, and Politics in Mormon Fundamentalism](#) (Brandeis University Press, May 8, 2012).

Matthew Bowman, [The Mormon People: The Making of an American Faith](#) (Random House, January 24, 2012).

Samuel Morris Brown, [In Heaven as It Is on Earth: Joseph Smith and the Early Mormon Conquest of Death](#) (Oxford University Press, January 2, 2012).

Richard L. Bushman and A. Scott Howe, eds., [Parallels and Convergence: Mormon Thought and Engineering Vision](#) (Greg Kofford Books, Inc., February 28, 2012).

George Kurian, ed., [The Encyclopedia of Christian Civilization](#) (Wiley-Blackwell, January 11, 2012).

Tom Mould, [Still, the Small Voice: Narrative, Personal Revelation, and the Mormon Folk Tradition](#) (Utah State University Press, October 1, 2011).

Lynita K. Newswander and Lee Trepanier, [LDS in the USA: Mormonism and the Making of American Culture](#) (Baylor University Press, February 1, 2012).

MSSA Website

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. Also available: contact information, "Ask an Expert" archives, online due-paying, and MSSA leadership information.

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, "Mormonism and its Historians: The State of the Field," *Religion Compass*, Vol. 5, No. 12 (December 2011): 720-30.

Chiung Hwang Chen, "Marketing Religion Online: The LDS Church's SEO Efforts," *Journal of Media and Religion*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (November 2011): 185-205.

John J. Davies et al., "Habitual, Unregulated Media Use and Marital Satisfaction in Recently Married LDS Couples," *Western Journal of Communication*, Vol. 76, No. 1 (January 2012): 65-85.

Amy Hoyt and Sara M. Patterson, "Mormon Masculinity: Changing Gender Expectations in the Era of Transition from Polygamy to Monogamy, 1890-1920," *Gender and History*, Vol. 23, No. 1, (April 2011): 72-91.

Timothy Willem Jones, "The Missionaries' Position: Polygamy and Divorce in the Anglican Communion, 1888-1988," *Journal of Religious History*, Vol. 35, No. 3 (September 2011): 393-408.

Mormon Studies academic journals

- | | |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| -AML Annual | -BYU Studies |
| -Dialogue | -Claremont Journal of Mormon Studies |
| -Element | -FARMS Review |
| -International Journal
of Mormon Studies | -Irreantum |
| -Issues in Religion and
Psychotherapy | -John Whitmer Historical
Association Journal |
| -Journal of Book of
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).

Bulletin Board

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

News

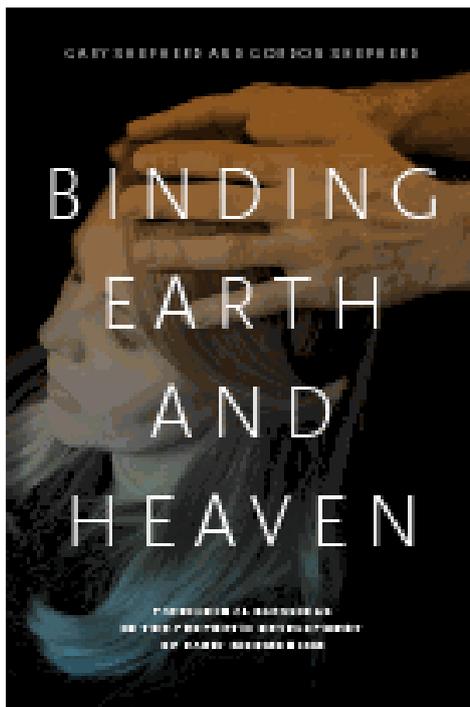
MSSA MEMBERS Rick Phillips and Ryan T. Cragun have written a report based on the 2008 American Religious Identification Survey entitled "Mormons in the United States 1990-2008: Socio-demographic Trends and Regional Differences."

It is available in PDF format here:

<http://commons.trincoll.edu/aris/files/2011/12/Mormons2008.pdf>

A NEW PUBLICATION from Gordon Shepherd and Gary Shepherd entitled *Binding Earth and Heaven: Patriarchal Blessings in the Prophetic Development of Early Mormonism* will be available in the fall of 2012. See the description on the following page for more details.

Binding Earth and Heaven
Patriarchal Blessings in the Prophetic Development of Early Mormonism
Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd



“This is a truly original work. It draws upon both primary and secondary sources to demonstrate the importance of the Mormon ritual institution of patriarchal blessings, which is widespread among Mormons at the grassroots but little known outside the church.”

—Armand L. Mauss, Washington State University

Bulletin Board

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Binding Earth and Heaven description continued:

In *Binding Earth and Heaven*, Gary Shepherd and Gordon Shepherd use early nineteenth-century Mormonism as a case study to examine questions about how new religious movements may, as rare exceptions, survive and even eventually become successful in spite of intense opposition. Initial scorn and contempt for Mormonism—the fledgling creation of a young and ill-educated, Joseph Smith—quickly elevated to mob violence as both Smith’s innovative teachings and converted followers proliferated, resulting in widely held perceptions that the Mormons constituted a social menace. This book examines how Mormonism attracted and maintained the loyalty of increasing numbers of people despite mounting hostilities and severe hardships.

The book focuses on the unique Mormon ritual (and accompanying doctrinal underpinnings) of “patriarchal blessings.” Patriarchal blessings were an innovative adaption of the Old Testament practice of fathers making quasi-legal pronouncements over the heads of their sons—a way of verbally conferring rights, promises, admonition, and guidance to heirs. *Binding Earth and Heaven* shows how the organizational complexities of this practice contributed to strengthening and sustaining member faith and fealty, thereby bolstering the continuity and development of Mormonism.

Gordon Shepherd is Professor of Sociology at the University of Central Arkansas.

Gary Shepherd is Professor Emeritus of Sociology and Anthropology at Oakland University.

144 pages | 6 x 9 | December

ISBN 978-0-271-05633-3 | cloth: \$54.95 sh

Sociology/Religion