

# CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

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## A Year of Mormon Studies in the Classroom

BY Patrick Q. Mason

Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies

In my highly biased view, the past year has been an unqualified success for the Mormon Studies program at Claremont Graduate University. By virtually any measure the program is moving onward and upward, building on the strong foundation laid by Richard and Claudia Bushman and Armand Mauss, as well as all the students, in previous years.

I am especially grateful for the hard work and dedication of our Mormon Studies Council, which has not only given me support and sound advice but has been active in fundraising. Now that the Howard

W. Hunter Chair has been funded, our priorities have turned to raising money for student fellowships so that we can continue to attract the best and brightest and help finance

an otherwise extremely expensive graduate education. I am also tremendously gratified by the unqualified support the Mormon Studies program has received from the leadership of the university

and the school. Claremont is truly a congenial home for our one-of-a-kind endeavor, still the only graduate-level program in Mormon Studies in the world.

Everything we do begins and ends with the students—that, along with the pursuit of knowledge, is what higher education is all about. We have tremendous students in the School of Religion at CGU, and I have been stimulated by the learning experiences we have shared in the classroom this year. I taught two Mormon-themed courses in 2011-2012: “Approaching Mormonism” in the fall, and “Gendering

Mormonism” in the spring. The fall course was an introduction to some of the most significant academic books and scholars of Mormonism, and is a course I will regularly teach to orient students to

some of the “classics” in the field. Of course, with the unparalleled pace of scholarship on Mormonism these days, it’s impossible to keep up, let alone introduce students to everything they “need to read” in

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one short semester. But we covered a lot of ground, and it was a valuable experience for this up-and-coming generation of scholars to see how they stand on the shoulders of their predecessors, as well as mapping out where they can make their own contributions as they write research papers and ultimately their theses and dissertations.

Given the sensitivity of some of the topics we would be covering, I must admit approaching my “Gendering Mormonism” class in the spring a bit apprehensively. The material covered in the course is of central importance to any full understanding of Mormon theology or practice, historical and contemporary, but I didn’t know

[see **Classroom**, 3]

# Our Pioneering Adventure in Mormon Scholarship

BY Steve Bradford

*Chair of the Mormon Studies Council*

I am honored to stand on the shoulders of some true giants of the Mormon faith in California – including my pioneering predecessors who have served as chair of the Mormon Studies Council at Claremont Graduate University – Blair Hoyt, Joe Bentley and Randy Huff. After living in Pasadena for almost 25 years, I am likewise pleased to be more closely associated with the legendary lawyer and former president of our Pasadena area Mormon community, Howard W. Hunter, who went on to become the 14th worldwide president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

In his 2007 message endorsing the creation of the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints recalled that as President Hunter considered the ways in which the Church could be better understood, he appreciated first and foremost the language of faith

through which it is taught in homes, Church services, and Church-sponsored religious institutes at Brigham Young University and elsewhere throughout the world.

Elder Holland also observed, however, that President Hunter recognized the simultaneous need for respected academic centers that could foster greater worldwide understanding of the Church through the language of scholarship and that, if the Church's first California prophet "were alive today, he would be expressing his deepest gratitude for the vision that is linking his name, and that of the Church he loved, with such a distinguished institution as Claremont."

As we fast-forward five years from 2007, I'm pleased to report that President Hunter's prophetic vision articulated by Elder Holland is now coming to fruition. As we previously described below to a few

of our generous donors, Claremont's Mormon Studies Program is rapidly garnering the requisite prestige, credibility, and visibility to ensure its enduring staying power and a bright future ahead, including in the following ways:

## *Prestige*

With the hiring of Dr. Patrick Q. Mason (Ph.D., University of Notre Dame; B.A., Brigham Young University) as the second Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies and Associate Professor of Religion, we have secured a dynamic young scholar and educator who, in his first year at Claremont, is already attracting as students some of the most promising minds interested in the study of Mormonism. An eloquent spokesperson, a prolific writer, and an effective teacher, Patrick is establishing a name that is well known among the media and others looking for informed perspectives on Mormonism.

## *Credibility*

When National Public Radio, the History Channel, the *Washington Post*, the *Huffington Post*, and a host of other national news outlets need reliable information about Mormonism, they call us. Increasingly, the Mormon Studies Program at Claremont is becoming

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[see *Pioneering Adventure*, 5]

## Classroom, *continued from page 1*

how our class conversations would go. Any fears I had were immediately allayed. As I hope will often be the case, we had more non-LDS than LDS students in the class. This helps fulfill one of the primary goals of the Mormon Studies program, which is to train future scholars and teachers of religion to be able to talk about Mormonism intelligently and honestly, based on a solid foundation in the requisite primary and secondary sources, and with empathy toward the lived religious experience of millions of people worldwide.

What I appreciated most was the open and welcoming climate for rigorous and frank discussion that developed in the class, which I attribute to the scholarly seriousness and personal graciousness of the students. Committed Latter-day Saint students were able to talk about both the deep meaning they find in their chosen faith tradition, but also the very real challenges they live with as they encounter various gender issues in the Church. Non-LDS students, who ranged from believing members of other traditions to ardent secularists, felt free to ask any question or make any

critique, knowing that they wouldn't be labeled "anti-Mormon." Many of them were particularly taken with the idea of a Heavenly Mother. Our conversations were rich, nuanced, analytical, and faithful to the complexity and messiness of human experience (Mormon and otherwise). We spent so much time discussing and arguing and joking and yelling that more often than not we reached the three-hour mark without having covered all our assigned reading material; one of the students exclaimed in frustration, "This needs to be a six-hour class!"

One of the primary goals of the class was to put Mormonism and gender studies in conversation with one another, allowing each one to critique and enrich the other. Along these lines, I thought one particularly important comment came in an ethnographic paper written by a (non-LDS) student after visiting a three-hour Sunday meeting block (a class requirement for all the students). These are real people, she noted—real women and men! It's amazing what happens when our analysis leaves the abstractions of the ivory tower and becomes connected to flesh and

blood. It can be easy to belittle or demonize the imagined other, but becomes harder to do so when we start to get to know them personally. It was this consistent recognition of the profound humanity of our subjects that imbued the class with a sense of deep engagement rather than the superficiality of most of our public and private (and, unfortunately, too often academic) discussions about religion. All of the students, I think, came away recognizing the power of analyzing Mormonism through a gendered lens. I, for one, came away a better scholar and a more committed and compassionate advocate of gender equality. In short, it was precisely what we hope to achieve in the graduate classroom, and particularly in Mormon Studies.

In the upcoming year I will teach courses on "Mormonism and Politics" (for obvious reasons) and a basic introduction to Mormonism, which a number of our non-LDS students have asked for. I fully expect our experiences to be just as rich as this past year—though I promise, despite the temptation otherwise, to keep the classes to "only" three hours. ❖

## "The Mormon Brand"

BY Elizabeth J. Mott  
*President, Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association*

This has been a busy and productive year for the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association. Since 2012 was our year to host the biennial graduate-student-organized Mormon Studies conference, much of our work this

year was conducted with this event in mind. "Laying Up Treasure: Mormons in the Marketplace" was a success, in spite of the rain and flooded streets.

Douglas Anderson, the president of Utah State University's Jon M.

Huntsman School of Business, provided the keynote address on "The Mormon Brand" at the conference on Friday, April 12. A graduate of Harvard Business School himself, Anderson spoke of his personal associations with Mormon men who have become prominent in the business world, including

[see **Mormon Brand**, 6]

# The Media, the “Mormon Moment,” and CGU Mormon Studies

BY Bryan Cottle

Vice-President, Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association

Throughout the past school year it has been near impossible to read, listen, or watch the news without hearing something about Mormonism. The floodgates of media attention burst open once again as Pastor Robert Jeffress denounced Mitt Romney’s Mormonism as a cult. What followed was a media snowball effect. Soon the topic of discussion advanced past evangelical Christians’ perception of Mormonism to include issues such as, proxy baptisms performed in behalf of Holocaust victims, blacks and the priesthood, and other controversial topics. In response, the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints stepped up to defend their beliefs. They did so through editorials, written by director of Public Affairs Michael Otterson, as well as releasing one of their most popular Mormon ads featuring *The Killers* front man Brandon Flowers. This media push and pull, classified as the “Mormon moment,” has done more than turn attention toward the Mormon Church. It has turned attention toward Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University.

Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University has been highlighted in two ways, both of which can be attributed to this media frenzy. The first of these has been through Patrick Mason, the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies. In the past year media outlets flocked to

interview Mason in order obtain an academically sound approach to Mormonism. From September 2011 to the middle of June 2012, Mason has been interviewed and featured almost 30 times by various media outlets. He has been quoted in the *Washington Post*, *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*, the *Huffington Post*, *The Tennessean*, and the *Salt Lake Tribune*, just to name a few. Many were lengthy interviews conducted over radio or through podcasts. Radio shows aired in Los Angeles, Wisconsin, Detroit, New Orleans, Cape Town, South Africa, and even a spot on National Public Radio’s *All Things Considered*.

Topics covered in these news stories were just as captivating as the various outlets that chose to conduct the interviews. Topics included; the theological reasons evangelical Christians brand Mormonism as a cult, what a Mormon president of the United States could mean for American Mormons, in what ways could Romney use Mormonism to his advantage in the presidential election, how the Latter-day Saint Church deals with national growth, why anti-Mormonism has remained so prevalent in American society, and the central importance of proxy ordinances in Mormon theology. In each of these interviews not only were important topics of Mormonism discussed, but they introduced Patrick Mason

as the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies which in turn has brought much attention and recognition to Mormon Studies at CGU.

The second way that media attention has helped spotlight Mormon Studies at CGU is that in the heat of this “Mormon moment” *Deseret News* chose to write a featured story about CGU’s incorporation of Mormon Studies. The author, Rachel Brutsch, began by describing that years before this “Mormon moment” Claremont incorporated classes teaching their religion students about Mormonism (“California graduate university takes academic approach to Mormonism,” February 15, 2012). Highlighting the school’s approach of using scholarly language while respecting the language of faith, the article discussed the importance of a scholarly perspective of Mormonism at a time when many people were actively asking questions about the faith in both a political and cultural context. As CGU School of Religion Dean Tammi Schneider told the *Deseret News*, the university had “unbelievable foresight to get this in place before the election,” and that the school’s program could provide, “authoritative sources about Mormons that are academic, scholarly, knowledgeable, not offensive toward Mormons but have a clean secular stamp on them to help navigate what is going to be a very complicated year.”

Indeed, as Americans have embraced “The Book of Mormon”

[see **Media**, 5]

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## Pioneering Adventure, *continued from page 2*

the academic resource for journalists and thought-leaders from across the spectrum of American media. Current events suggest that the high level of media attention to Mormonism will not be going away anytime soon. Given its singular position as the only graduate program in the world dedicated to Mormon studies, Claremont is uniquely poised to be a leader in informing public discourse and creating understanding through reliable information.

### *Visibility*

Our Spring 2011 newsletter ([www.claremontmormonstudies.org/newsletter](http://www.claremontmormonstudies.org/newsletter)) listed 43 essays, articles, and presentations produced by 11 Claremont students and faculty members at conferences and for publication across the country. And we're still gathering momentum. This isn't scholarship for a narrow academic audience—this is scholarship for the world.

### *Staying Power*

Thanks to the pioneering generosity of many visionary donors, we are halfway to our \$6

million endowment goal. Our current endowment is now sufficient to perpetually fund the annual salary and benefits of the Howard W. Hunter Chair and Professor of Mormon Studies. And due to a unique agreement with Claremont Graduate University, we are assured that whoever holds this Chair will be a respectful friend of the Church and the endowment that bears President Hunter's name. As our endowment grows with the added generosity of our pioneering donors, we will be able to fully fund crucial fellowships to continue attracting the best graduate students and extend our worldwide outreach efforts.

### *A Bright Future*

Thanks to an excellent reputation established over the last few years by Richard and Claudia Bushman, and by the hard work of Professor Mason, we saw a sharp increase in the number of applicants to our Mormon studies program this year, both in overall numbers and in the impressive backgrounds of the candidate pool. And we are very pleased to announce that we have just admitted the largest

and most outstanding Mormon studies class ever (nine students) for the 2012–13 academic year. With further support from an expanding number of generous donors, we have the opportunity to capitalize on the growing interest of outstanding students throughout the world, provide them with financial support competitive with other elite universities, and continue our innovative efforts to share the Mormon experience around the world. Just one example is the Mormon Women's Oral History Project, which collects and catalogues at Claremont the stories of a broad spectrum of rank-and-file Mormon women and makes them accessible worldwide to interested students, scholars and the media.

We are thrilled at how this pioneering adventure in Mormon scholarship at Claremont Graduate University is now bearing fruit in honor of President Hunter and the Church he loved, just as it was envisioned by Elder Holland five years ago. We are indebted to the talented scholars and generous donors who are making it all happen. ❖

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## Media, *continued from page 4*

musical and watched with open eyes the potential of Mitt Romney becoming the first Mormon president of the United States, trustworthy academic sources need to be available in sorting out what has become a diverse range of thoughts and opinions regarding Mormonism. Through the many interviews of Patrick Mason and

Deseret News' story about Mormon Studies at CGU, we can see how this "Mormon moment" has not only focused national attention on The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, but that it has also directed attention to Mormon Studies here at our very own Claremont Graduate University. As many of CGU's religion students embark on

their various careers, we can only hope that this attention on CGU Mormon Studies as well as the increasing academic understanding of Mormonism will continue well into the future. For if there was ever a time when an academic understanding of Mormonism was needed by professors in mainstream universities that time is now. ❖

## Mormon Brand, *continued from page 3*

U.S. presidential candidate Mitt Romney. Integrity was the theme of his remarks. In identifying what is unique about Mormon business leaders he personally knows, Anderson said that they are not unlike other rational economic actors, but that their moral convictions and the cooperative orientation of their Mormon pioneer heritage provide constant reminders not to lie or exploit for personal financial gain. “Inspiration serves as circuit-breaker and shock absorber to the pace of the market,” he said.

Other highlights included the international development panel and a Saturday lunch plenary session, “Lessons from LDS Business Leaders in Southern California.” Cindy Packard showed us in concrete ways the work that her and her husband’s non-profit “Care for Life” has done in Mozambique; Warner Woodworth, a social entrepreneur from the BYU Marriott School of

Business, explained a concept he is pioneering, called “social tithing.” Woodworth works to extend the Mormon concept of financial tithing to social and intellectual capital. For instance, he donates a portion of his time and expertise every year to train disadvantaged people around the world who would not be able to afford consulting fees. He suggested that instead of investing all our surplus in stocks, we invest at least some of it in job creation. Roy Christensen, Chairman of the Board of the Ensign Group, Inc., and James Wilkinson, President/CEO of Pamco Machine Works, spoke to the question of how being a Latter-day Saint has informed their professional work in the public sphere.

The presentations will be made available on Vimeo, and will be accessible via the Claremont Mormon Studies Web site: [www.claremontmormonstudies.org](http://www.claremontmormonstudies.org). I want to personally thank Patrick

Mason for advising us, Bryan Cottle for handling conference publicity as CMSSA vice president, Lisa Clayton for taking care of the catering, Rachel Hunt Steenblik for serving as treasurer, Tom Evans for organizing the logistics, and David Golding for his technological expertise.

I have no doubt Bryan Cottle and Rachel Hunt Steenblik will do a tremendous job as president and vice president of CMSSA this coming year. We will have many new students joining us here in sunny California, which is very exciting to me. My hat is off to the LDS Council and to Patrick Mason for their phenomenal and tireless efforts at making CGU the place for Mormon Studies.

Next year’s Mormon Studies conference has already been decided. We will have the privilege of honoring the career of our own Armand Mauss. ♦

## Giving a History to Well-Behaved Mormon Women

BY Elizabeth J. Mott

*President, Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association*

Pulitzer-prize winning historian Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, who visited CGU on March 22, has famously said, “Well-behaved women seldom make history.” Ulrich has spent her career giving a history to obscure women—first to pious Puritans, then a colonial American

midwife, and now, polygamous nineteenth-century Mormon women. In an evening lecture in Albrecht Auditorium, she provided a preview of her forthcoming book on the subject of “Sentimentality and Plurality in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism.”

Victorian England and America were characterized by their sentimentality, Ulrich said. The Mormon practice of plural marriage seemed to inherently challenge Victorian America’s openly emotional display of empathetic familial relationships. Historians

have argued that Mormonism's plurality was an intentional, religious push-back against sentimentality, that Mormon plural marriage was hierarchical in nature, and evidence of a stoic religious devotion. However, based on her careful examination of numerous documents and artifacts, Ulrich is now questioning whether this explanation of nineteenth-century Mormon plurality is a fully accurate one. In fact, she said, she has found a surprising amount of sentimentality within Mormonism of this era.

Ulrich also visited Patrick Mason's class, "Gendering Mormonism." She quipped that she was visiting more as an artifact herself of second-wave Mormon feminism—the day's topic—than as a historian of colonial women. We received a behind-the-scenes look at the making of the so-called "Pink Issue" of *Dialogue* (1971). While it may seem like "pretty innocuous stuff" now, she said, their writing about housework, careers, and birth control among Mormon women was quite a radical move in the context of the time. With both joy and

dismay, Ulrich said that she sensed something stirring among young women now, "almost like we're starting over again."

In an effort to remedy this possible disconnect between second-wave feminism and the current one, scholars in Mormon Studies and Women's Studies in Religion at CGU are carrying forward Claudia Bushman's oral history project. In fact, I believe CGU is the place to be for those who want to research

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*"In fact, I believe CGU is the place to be for those who want to research and write about the history and life experiences of Mormon women."*

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and write about the history and life experiences of Mormon women. Claudia Bushman and Caroline Kline are co-editing a forthcoming book of essays on this oral history collection, which

will be published by Kofford Books. Lisa Clayton is spearheading the continuing effort to record, transcribe, and archive additional Mormon women's oral histories, and the School of Religion is expanding the project to include Jewish, Muslim, Catholic, and Protestant women. Within a few years, graduate students at CGU will be able to do comparative work on wave-making and well-behaved women across various religious traditions. ❖

## CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES NEWSLETTER

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