

CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES

— ✦ N E W S L E T T E R ✦ —

SPRING 2013 ✦ ISSUE No. 8

Thoughts from the Hunter Chair

BY Patrick Q. Mason

Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies

The Mormon moment may be over, but Mormon studies is alive and well. With the election past us, media and popular attention about Latter-day Saints will wane considerably, but there has never been a more auspicious time for the scholarly study of Mormonism.

We live in an era of mass media and social technologies that allow us to “connect” with thousands, even millions, of people at the click of a few buttons. We are witnessing a revolution in the way that higher education is being delivered, and it will be fascinating to see what will happen with developments such as MOOC’s (massive open online courses). Blogs have their place, and books and articles will remain our primary intellectual currency.

But even with all those other intellectual outlets—as valuable as they are—nothing replaces the intense, focused, sustained, mentored learning that occurs in the graduate school seminar. As the provost of Claremont Graduate

University is fond of saying, the research university is one of humankind’s greatest inventions—and graduate school is, at its best, the most refined version of that incomparable invention.

When we get it right, graduate education has been and remains a tremendous force for the advancement of human knowledge. Mormon Studies at

CGU is just one slice of that grand endeavor; Steve Bradford’s insightful column that follows reminds us of some of the reasons why the endeavor is worthy of not only our enthusiasm but our support as well. ✦

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The Sometimes Messy Process of Perfecting Mormons and Mormon Studies at Claremont

BY Steve Bradford

Chairman, Claremont Mormon Studies Council

The Art of Enduring Imperfect Critiques of Mormonism

A few months ago I attended a session of a Claremont Graduate University religious studies conference—not sponsored or organized by the Howard W. Hunter Foundation or the Mormon Studies Council, but with a remarkable number of presentations on Mormonism by both Mormon and non-Mormon religious studies scholars working on PhDs and MAs. I was accompanied by another member of our Claremont Mormon Studies Council.

The first presenter in our session was a non-Mormon scholar who appeared to fundamentally misunderstand the mechanics of how Mormons wear and utilize garments in their every-day lives and devotions. During the Q&A, my Council colleague systematically corrected her misconceptions, as did others in the mostly non-Mormon audience. Afterwards, he and I wondered why this fledgling scholar's colleagues couldn't have corrected her misconceptions before she presented them in a public setting. While I was mostly pleased by the high degree of interest in Mormon subjects at the conference (even though some still seemed to misunderstand us), my colleague on the Mormon Studies Council was less enthusiastic after witnessing that misunderstanding firsthand.

While Nobody's Perfect, Most Mormons and Scholars of Mormonism Try Really Hard

A few weeks later, Claremont Mormon Studies celebrated a momentous Mormon Studies conference in honor of the faith and scholarship of Armand Mauss. The list of renowned Mormon scholars who came to pay homage to this good man and his ground-breaking thinking was amazing—Richard and Claudia Bushman, Jan Shippo, Matthew Bowman, Levi Peterson, Patrick Mason and many others (including Dr. Mauss himself). And they did not disappoint. Although this was an academic conference, some of the scholarship was truly inspiring, including respectful, appreciative comments on the revelatory nature of oft-maligned Church correlation.

Of course, there were a few hard things said about Mormonism here as well, particularly as we learned about the fits and starts involved in translating our unique American brand of Christianity abroad. For example, some said that Mormonism would remain an American religion with international branches, rather than a truly international religion, as long as it continues to gravitate to conservative U.S. political causes and produce faith-promoting media with American actors. It was particularly hard for some faithful Mormons in attendance, who had sacrificed much time and treasure to legally maintain the traditional definition of marriage in California (while enduring significant persecution), to listen to a faithful foreign LDS church leader and scholar diminish the importance of those efforts and argue that the legal definition of marriage is of minor religious concern to many Mormons in other parts of the world.

So, after attending these disconcerting and invigorating conferences, I realize more than ever that Mormon scholarship (like my local Mormon congregation) can be a messy thing. Sometimes scholars don't gather or comprehend all the facts (especially students who are still learning their craft). Sometimes they inadvertently or even purposefully skew the facts to fit within a preconceived hypothesis. Like the Mormons they study, scholars are imperfect people who make human mistakes but usually, if not always, try to do their best in life and in their chosen fields of endeavor.

"Unbiased" Secular Scholars Can Sometimes Explain Mormonism Better than Mormons Can

Shortly after attending these conferences, I read a series of "field studies" forwarded to the Mormon Studies Council by the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies, Patrick Mason, prepared by members of Dr. Mason's "Introduction to Mormonism" class. These non-Mormon student scholars were required to attend an entire three-hour block of Sunday meetings at a local Mormon congregation and report on their findings. The reports they filed were completely opposite in understanding to the ill-informed presentation on the Mormon garment that my Mormon Studies Council colleague and I had endured a few weeks earlier.

Here are just a few excerpts from these non-Mormon graduate student-scholars' remarkable field reports:

1. "When [the visiting stake president] spoke, he asked the congregation to pray *for* him, which demonstrated both his level of humility in an authoritative position and that his title did not inherently place him on a pedestal above and detached from the congregation. Further, he addressed the congregation as brothers and sisters. This terminology promotes equality of status among the community... [In my faith tradition], priests ... greet their "children"; they become their fathers and are therefore ideologically separated from their flock... If [they] cried during a prayer, there would be a church full of astonished parishioners.... [But in this Mormon congregation the stake president] cried during a prayer... [T]his president was part of a community in which emotions are permitted."

2. "At every turn, the Mormon community was inviting, engaging, and welcoming, and I would venture to say that it is this fellowship that appeals most to those considering joining the church. As [Matthew] Bowman states..., '[the church's] vision of heaven as a community of the like-minded reveals two characteristic features of Mormonism: its understanding of salvation in terms of community and its optimism about humanity's potential to gain it.' The members of the LDS church that I met during my visit embody this to an extent that is unlike any other religious populace that I have encountered. It is not a distant tenet or impersonal dogma; it is lived every day, and is the beginning and end of their religious experience."

3. "I was very excited that the first speaker was a young lady in middle school who was giving her first talk in front of the congregation. She was hardly nervous, and was more enthusiastic about sharing her reflections on being 'the weird Mormon' in school and how she had found true friends in those who respected her faith as much as any other part of her. She focused on the need to 'act on the words that we hear,' further proof that Mormonism is a lived and practiced faith, rather than a merely reflected one. I don't think it would be possible for a Mormon to be an 'Easter and Christmas' sort of practitioner—faith is inherent in every aspect of life, not just in Sunday worship."

4. "In the Mormon church, I didn't see a single cross or crucifix. This perhaps points to the optimism inherent in the community, the focus on resurrection and going out and doing what is laid down in scripture. The fact that Jesus appeared to the Americans as another act following

his resurrection is a prime example for Mormons to follow. The religion isn't over; the canon is open, or rather, reopened by Joseph Smith and his revelations."

5. And finally, this excerpt from one student scholar's "scriptural account" of his visit to a Mormon chapel: "And [the missionaries] did reveal unto me that there would be many little children..., and that it might happen that they would wail and gnash their teeth... But I suffered the little children, and I was not wroth with them. For, some weeks ago, ...[such a] wretched cacophony [of wailing children] did strike me as an abomination among the ritual and pomp [of my church's] liturgy. But in this place it was not so. Yea, the children here were loud, even unto screaming bloody murder. But here the children seemed part of the purpose, not a hindrance thereof."

Claremont Mormon Studies is Better Positioned than Mormon-Owned Institutions to Credibly Disseminate Respectful Mormon Scholarship to the Media and Non-Mormon Scholars

Don't these Claremont non-Mormon scholars' treatments of Mormon congregations ring true to faithful Mormons like me? Shouldn't we support the publication and dissemination of Claremont Mormon Studies' unique secular brand of respectful (and often inspirational) Mormon scholarship to secular media and academic outlets throughout the world, especially when we know these outlets won't give as much credence to similar material produced by our faith-based Church Headquarters or Brigham Young University? Isn't the upside of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and this Claremont Mormon Studies endeavor worthy of our support even as we cringe at the negativity and duplicity occasionally evident in both Mormon studies and our own Mormon wards?

As a proud graduate of Brigham Young University (gooo Cougars!), my recent experiences with Mormon studies at Claremont Graduate University demonstrate the value of examining Mormonism from both faithful and secular perspectives. On the one hand, while a faithful environment (such as BYU) can endow a person with unmatched spiritual power and optimism, a secular environment (such as Claremont) can help a person understand differences among religions, how some differences can be harmonized, and how other differences can be understood and even admired (as Dr. Mason's non-Mormon scholars have done with their field visits to Mormon church services).

Both faithful and secular scholarship are useful and even necessary. Both are worthy of the appreciation and support of a faithful Mormon like me. While one perspective seeks to gradually influence worldwide opinions of Mormonism through optimistic and comforting spiritual messaging and wise public relations, the other perspective can sometimes more readily promote a worldwide understanding of certain important aspects of Mormonism (its doctrines, its humanitarian outreach, its lived experience) merely by being recognized as scholarly and “unbiased.”

President Howard W. Hunter and Elder Jeffrey R. Holland Have Recognized the Need to Talk About Mormonism from Both Faithful and Scholarly Perspectives

I think Elder Jeffrey R. Holland of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints best articulated the twin needs for faithful and scholarly examinations of Mormonism in his 2007 message endorsing the creation of the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies at Claremont. Elder Holland recalled that as President Hunter considered ways in which the Church could be better understood, he “always wanted us to talk with those beyond our own circle. To communicate first and foremost in our language of faith, but wherever possible, to add the language of scholarship, which would expand our circle of influence even farther.” Elder Holland punctuated his remarks with the declaration 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.”

No doubt Elder Holland, as a modern-day prophet and scholar, understands better than anyone the primary need to disseminate the truths of the Gospel of Jesus Christ as well as the ancillary value of propagating responsible Mormon scholarship.

A Faithful Mormon Covenants to Support the Church and Recognizes the Value of Supporting Mormon Studies

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has never asserted a monopoly on Christian teaching and practice. Neither does Claremont claim to have a lock on responsible Mormon scholarship. Yet I’ve witnessed such

an overwhelming abundance of these qualities within each institution to know they are both worthy of my admiration and support. Thus, as the faithful Mormons that many of us are, and after meeting our financial covenants to the Church and its related faith-promoting humanitarian and academic institutions that we all love, I would urge a visit to claremontmormonstudies.org/donate.html to donate to the ancillary and complementary noble cause of Mormon studies.

In this regard, we continue to marvel at the remarkable support of those preceding us in this effort. Certainly, the most notable examples are Roy and Carol Christensen. Building on their lion’s share donations to the \$3 million endowment of the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies occupied by Dr. Mason, last September Roy and Carol came back with a \$500,000 initial endowment of Claremont’s Robert L. Millet Fellowship, dedicated to training scholars pursuing careers in religious education at BYU and other LDS Church institutes of religion. In furtherance of the Christensens’ visionary generosity, we are now seeking to double that endowment to \$1 million, while we also initiate a campaign to endow a \$3 million unrestricted fellowship to attract secular scholars like the ones taking Dr. Mason’s Introduction to Mormonism class.

Church First, Mormon Studies Second

Naturally, as a faithful Mormon, my first allegiance will always be to the Church that I love. But as a faithful Mormon who cares deeply about how my Church is scrutinized by non-Mormon scholars and portrayed by secular media to the world, I also gratefully support the messy, sometimes unpleasant, often inspiring, and nearly always respectful and thought-provoking Mormon scholarship coming out of Claremont.

As Elder Holland declared in his 2007 Claremont Mormon Studies endorsement, I would like to think that President Hunter feels the same as we do about this one and only graduate-level center of Mormon studies. Indeed, here at Claremont, Howard W. Hunter Mormon Studies Chair Patrick Mason, Howard W. Hunter Foundation Chair R. Randall Huff, and I are doing our “imperfect best” to assure that President Hunter and his associates will always be proud of the language of scholarship spoken at the only secular Mormon studies program bearing the name of a latter-day prophet. ♦

STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

We asked students to provide some details about their recent academic work. Included here are some of their contributions to the field.

Shawn Bennion

- "Current Conflicts in the Middle East: Islamic Infrastructure, Jewish Justifications, and Polemical Performances of Imagined Pasts," Guest Lecture, University of LaVerne, April 22, 2013.

Alan Clark

- "The April 14, 1890 Day of Destruction." The California American Studies Association 2013 Annual Meeting. San Diego State University, CA, April 27, 2013.

Bryan Cottle

- "The Long and Winding Road: A Right to Religious Polygamy." The Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

Thomas Evans

- "Migrants as Martyrs: Santo Toribio and the Catholicization of the Border." American Academy of Religion Western Region Annual Conference, "Religion in Public Life," Arizona State University, March 10, 2013.
- "Mainstreaming Polygamy: Two Approaches to the Legitimization of Plural Marriage." The Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

Nick Frederick

- Hired to position of Assistant Visiting Professor, Department of Ancient Scripture, Brigham Young University.
- Passed dissertation defense, March 27th, 2013; Graduated May 18th, 2013.
- "Joseph Smith and the Gospel of John," BYU Church History Symposium, "Approaching Antiquity: Joseph Smith's Study of the Ancient World."

David Golding

- Adjunct Professor, Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 2011–2013.
- "The Doctrine and Covenants Revelations as a Textual Holy of Holies," Faith and Knowledge Conference, Wesley Theological Seminary, February 2013.
- "Heavenly Mother," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.
- "The Amherst Conference Missions: A New System," Mormon History Association Annual Conference, June 2013.

Alexandra Griffin

- "The Son of Man Cometh Not in the Form of a Woman: Ann Lee and Joseph Smith in Comparison," American Academy of Religion Pacific North West Conference, Seattle University, Seattle, WA May 3, 2013.
- "She No Longer Had Need of Food and No Longer Could Digest": Fasting, the Body,

and Catherine of Siena," The Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

Lincoln Hale

- Hugh W. Nibley Fellowship, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013.
- "Omission of the Lectures on Faith: A Mormon Response to Political Turmoil in the Early Twentieth Century," American Academy of Religion Pacific North West Conference, Seattle University, Seattle, WA May 3, 2013.

Magi Madsen-Hernandez

- "She Returns the Gaze: A Survey of the Female Figure in Neo-Coptic Iconography." The Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

Caroline Kline

- Margo L. Goldsmith Memorial Fellowship, CGU, April 2013.
- Co-editor, *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.
- "Self and Other," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg

Kofford Books, March 2013.

- "Patriarchy," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.
- "Saying Goodbye to the Final Say: The Softening and Reimagining of Mormon Male Headship Ideologies." Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

Richard Livingston

- Dissertation Grant, Claremont Graduate University, 2013–2014.
- "The Fallibility of Memory," a response to Pamela Anderson, "Confidence in the Power of Memory: Ricoeur's Hermeneutics of Life," The Thirty-fourth Annual Philosophy of Religion Conference, "The Legacy of Paul Ricoeur," Claremont February 8–9, 2013.
- Religious Education Dissertation Grant, Brigham Young University, 2012–2013
- Adjunct Instructor, "Religion and Science," California State University, Fullerton, Spring 2013 and Fall 2012.
- Adjunct Instructor, "Mormonism," California State University, Fullerton, Fall 2012.

Elizabeth Mott

- "Singlehood," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral*

History Collection, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.

- "Exemplification of Islam in the New York Times and the Washington Post after 9/11: Anti-American Muslims Abroad and Patriotic Muslim-Americans at Home." American Academy of Religion Western Region Annual Conference, Santa Clara University, Santa Clara, CA, March 24–26 2012.

Elisa Pulido

- "Missions," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.

Taunalyn Rutherford

- "The Relief Society," in *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Claremont Oral History Collection*, Salt Lake City: Greg Kofford Books, March 2013.
- "Excavating Eve: Uncovering the Narrative of the Mormon Mother of All Living." American Academy of Religion Western Region Annual Conference, "Religion in Public Life," Arizona State University, March 9–11, 2013.

Andrew Smith

- Hugh W. Nibley Fellowship, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious Scholarship, 2013.
- "Gender-Bending Hajj: Masculinity and Femininity on Display and in Interplay." Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation

Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.

- "Mamluk Jerusalem: Architecturally Challenging Narratives." Fourteenth Annual CGU Student Research Conference, "I Am in the World to Change the World," Claremont, January 25, 2013.

Rachel Hunt Steenblik

- CGU Religion Student Council 2013 Essay Contest Winner, "A Mother There: The Need for Heavenly Mother in Latter-day Saint Theology."
- "Levinas, Derrida, the Philosophy of Hospitality, and Sister Missionaries." American Academy of Religion Pacific North West Conference, at Seattle University, Seattle, WA May 4, 2013.
- "A Mother There: The Need for Heavenly Mother in Latter-day Saint Theology." Sixth Annual Religions in Conversation Conference, "Sacred Bodies: Gender, Marriage, and Sexuality in Text and Tradition," Claremont, February 22, 2013.
- "An Awareness of What is Missing: Jürgen Habermas on the Consequences of Secularism." Fourteenth Annual CGU Student Research Conference, "I Am in the World to Change the World," Claremont, CA January 25, 2013.

New Student Joins the Program

Lincoln Hale

Lincoln earned a Master of Theological Studies in Ancient Biblical Studies at the Iliff School of Theology in Denver, CO. He is currently pursuing a Ph.D in the History of Christianity program at Claremont Graduate University. His interests include ancient languages (Coptic, Greek, Hebrew, et al.), Coptic studies, and Mormon studies. Lincoln served an LDS mission in Romania from 1999–2001. He and his wife, Anna, have a son and two daughters.

Claremont Mormon Women Oral History Project Archived in Honnold-Mudd

BY Lisa Clayton

Director, Claremont Mormon Women Oral History Project

In 2009 Claudia Bushman had a brainchild that today has grown into a significant contribution to the study of contemporary religion. She saw the need to document the experiences and thoughts of Mormon women of the 20th and 21st centuries and so created the *Claremont Mormon Women Oral History Project*. The Mormon Studies Council at Claremont Graduate University provided initial and continuing support for the project. The results to date: over 150 interviews with LDS women that generated more than 2,700 pages of original transcripts. In May, ten volumes of histories were archived in Honnold-Mudd Library Special Collections at Claremont Graduate University where they are now available to researchers. Another volume is planned for later this year.

Funded by The Howard W. Hunter Foundation and fostered by its relationship with the Mormon Studies Council, the oral history project started with the participation of students in Dr. Bushman's classes at CGU and non-student women in southern California. Soon an informal network of interviewers spread to other states and countries. The project includes histories from across the United States, parts of Europe, and Australia. The histories are recorded, transcribed,

and if needed, translated by the interviewers, requiring hundreds of hours of volunteer labor. Dr. Bushman and current and former CGU students continue to be involved. Lisa Clayton became director of the project in 2011, and David Golding is the technical advisor. Patrick Mason serves as the faculty advisor.

Good things have grown out of this project: (1) a successful conference sponsored by The Mormon Studies Council, "Women's Lives, Women's Voices: Agency In the Lives of LDS Women," held at CGU in 2010 (more than 160 attended the conference that featured papers using the oral histories as primary documents); (2) a book of essays based on the histories published in 2013, titled *Mormon Women Have Their Say: Essays from the Oral History Collection*, edited by Claudia Bushman and Caroline Kline; (3) and to date many conference papers, readers' theaters, and theses using the oral histories as primary resources.

The histories include the women's answers to questions about their family background, education, religious education, callings, patriarchy and Priesthood, answers to prayer, life crises, etc. They reveal the diversity and depth of

Mormon women's lives and religious experience in a way unlike other historical research. A brief sample from oral history #007 illustrates how a woman felt about prayer, her mother, and the priesthood:

Some of the most powerful prayers that changed my life were when my mother would kneel down with us, especially when we were traveling or going back to school. She'd say, "Marie, let's have a little prayer before you go," and we'd kneel around our old couch. And she'd pour out her heart to the Lord, asking that I be protected and guided, and though we didn't have the priesthood in the family, I never doubted for a moment that I was well and truly blessed.

The oral histories take the historian into these women's experience in a way most research cannot. The histories give us a snapshot of women's lives unlikely to be captured in any other way. We hear not only the choices they make, but also how they come to make them.

The project anticipates continuing to receive histories into the foreseeable future. If you are interested in participating, please email Lisa Clayton, the current director of the project, at lisaclayton2@gmail.com for more information. ♦

Reflections on “Martyrs and Villains”

BY Chase Kirkham

PhD Student, History of Christianity and Religions of North America

Dr. Terryl Givens was the final Claremont Mormon Studies lecturer for the 2012-2013 school year. His engaging lecture, entitled “Martyrs and Villains in the American Saga,” was given on April 11, 2013 and examined the various portrayals of Mormons and Mormonism made by both friends and foes of the LDS Church from its formation in 1830 to the present. One example that Givens shared of these polarizing portrayals was the way that nineteenth-century apologists for and detractors of Mormonism characterized polygamy. Members of the church cast plural marriage as a means whereby a super race of children

could be raised. Detractors, on the other hand, viewed polygamy as a plot by Mormon men to lure women into their desert harem through their mesmeric powers. Throughout the lecture, Givens accented the underlying tension that has existed among apologists and enemies of the LDS Church as they have attempted to understand how Mormonism fits within the broader American culture.

One of the most striking conclusions of Givens’s lecture is illustrated by the events of the 1893 Parliament of World Religions held in Chicago. While invitations to delegates were sent to religious groups all over the world, the

Mormons were not invited. When the church pressed the Parliament to allow a Mormon delegate into their proceedings, the Parliament capitulated only to retract their invitation later. Meanwhile at the concurrent Columbian Exposition, the Mormon Tabernacle Choir took second place in the choral contest. Considering these facts, Givens concluded that America would let the Mormons sing for them but would not respect their beliefs. Such an attitude continues today.

Indeed, the most “famous” Mormons today are entertainers. Mormons are showcased as singers, dancers, and contestants on reality TV shows but their identifying

[see [Reflections](#), 9]

Reminiscence at the Culmination of Coursework

BY Taunalyn Rutherford

PhD Student, History of Christianity and Religions of North America

Every May during my past four years at Claremont Graduate University I have watched as the graduation tent is erected on the quad in front of the library. I am usually trying to finish writing a term paper as I look out the windows of the Honnald Library at the preparations for the commencement ceremony. My mind will inevitably wander to the hope of my future graduation day. I recently finished my last semester of coursework and soon I will be under the graduation

tent experiencing the culmination of what has been one of the best educational experiences of my life. As I look back on all I have learned over the past four years and look ahead to teaching religion classes at BYU this summer my feelings are bitter sweet. I look forward to what is ahead but in some ways I wish I could always be a student at CGU. Fortunately there is much that I take with me from this incredible opportunity.

I remember my first day at CGU.

Richard Bushman had agreed to let me sit in on his Mormon Scriptures class. I can still remember the lively discussion about how Mormon scriptures should be studied at an institution like CGU. I had dreamed of an opportunity like this years earlier, after finishing my Master’s degree: A program where I could pursue a PhD in religious studies with an emphasis on Mormonism with renowned scholar Richard Bushman and along side top students in the field. As I experienced my first day in Bushman’s seminar I felt like I was dreaming. By the end of the day I was taking the course for credit and starting my application for admission to the PhD program. Richard Bushman exemplified how

[see [Reminiscence](#), 10]

Reflections, *continued from page 8*

religious beliefs have yet to be taken seriously. Givens expressed his frustration with the fact that the two most common questions he received during the 2012 presidential election were about “Kolob” and “magic underwear.”

Will Mormon doctrine ever be taken seriously? Or are attempts to identify the doctrines of the LDS church beyond “Kolob” and “magic underwear” doomed to a Sisyphus-like fate—continually struggling to reach the peak but finding resistance from the crushing weight of the boulder, which in this case is public caricature? Is the LDS Church to remain forever in its jester-like role in the American religious court where it is allowed to entertain but never to hold council with the “nobles”? If so, a change would need to happen for the inquiring public to associate Mormonism with its identifying beliefs rather than as a religion of singers and dancers. Some of these ignored beliefs that Givens mentioned are pre-mortal

existence, the potential for earthly relationships to endure beyond death, and a God who not only has power to save his children but who grieves with and shares in their pain.

Scholars of Mormonism—those seasoned as well as those new to the craft—are in an influential position to trigger such a change. For they have the ability both to shape the image of the LDS Church for church members as well as those encountering Mormonism for the

first time. About Richard Bushman’s book *Joseph Smith: Rough Stone Rolling*, *The New York Times Book Review* wrote: “Bushman earns a place for his biography on the very short shelf

reserved for books on Mormonism with appeal to initiates and outsiders, too.” While the review is high praise for *Rough Stone Rolling*, it is also regrettably revealing, for it measures the scholarship about Mormonism that can “appeal to initiates and outsiders” as “very short.”

“Givens concluded that America would let the Mormons sing for them but would not respect their beliefs. Such an attitude continues today.”

If Mormonism wants to be recognized beyond singing and dancing, it needs to find a way to make its core beliefs recognizable and accessible to the inquiring public. In other words, the “Mormon bookshelf” needs to be much bigger. Such is the challenge for the scholars of Mormonism, not to speak to a Mormon audience alone, but to place the religion—both as it appeared in the past and as it manifests itself in the present—in its proper social, political, economic, religious, and historical contexts. The results of well-balanced and honest scholarship are twofold: one, believing members of the church can gain insight into how the teachings of their leaders, for example, Joseph Smith and Brigham Young, responded to the challenges of their day. And two, academics and lay persons who do not affiliate with the church can see that indeed, the church is a part of the fabric of American culture and that to ignore it or to warp its image is in fact, distorting a piece of the American identity. ❖

Reminiscence, *continued* from page 8

to unite faith and scholarship. He taught me to always “tell the truth in love,” when approaching difficult questions in Mormon Studies. Mostly, Richard helped me to believe in myself as a scholar and welcomed me into the Claremont Mormon Studies community.

When I was officially admitted to the program I began taking classes from both Richard and Claudia Bushman. I became involved in the Mormon Women’s Oral History project that Claudia had begun and discovered the power in Mormon women’s narratives both 19th and 20th century ones. Claudia and Richard were and continue to be incredible mentors for students at CGU. The first term paper that I wrote for Claudia’s class became my first published chapter that was included in Volume 1 of *Women of Faith in the Latter Days*. The Oral History project continues to be an integral part of my research not only with the recent publication of *Mormon Women Have Their Say* but also as I formulate my dissertation that will draw heavily from the Mormon Women’s Oral histories in conversation with Oral histories of Sikh women.

During the past two years Patrick Mason has accomplished the impossible in filling the shoes of Richard Bushman as the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies and I am so grateful to have had him as a teacher and mentor. I have watched as students, myself included, have gained tremendous respect for Patrick as a teacher. His classes are some of the most academically rigorous

and demanding and yet he has become a favorite of students in the Religion department, both LDS and non. Patrick has taught me how to articulate Mormon history doctrine and praxis more effectively in the language of academe. In his *Gendering Mormonism* and *Introduction to Mormonism* classes that were geared to include non-LDS students, Patrick built bridges of understanding and inspired students from diverse backgrounds to use the lens of Mormonism in order to understand religion in general. He has accomplished this while never compromising his integrity as a scholar or as an LDS Church member and his work has allowed the LDS Church be viewed in a more positive light.

My experience with Mormon Studies at Claremont has had an impact on me not only academically but also personally. I am a better wife and mother today because of what I have experienced and learned at Claremont and what my family has learned in supporting my efforts. In my interpersonal relationships with people of other faiths I feel I have a greater capacity to understand and communicate. My contributions in church service have been magnified. My Claremont experience has given me a great reservoir of knowledge from which to draw that will inform my teaching and leadership in the future. Finally, I have new friends and colleagues from CMSSA, CST and CGU that I hope to continue to associate with socially and professionally. My connection to the Mormon Studies community at CGU will provide continued education even after my graduation ceremony under that big tent in a coming May. ♦

CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES NEWSLETTER

A joint publication of the

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