

# CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES

NEWSLETTER

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## ...But What Exactly Do You Do?

BY Patrick Q. Mason

Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies

When I meet people outside of the university context, they are often quite interested in the fact that I am a “professor of religion.” I have learned that this means

different things to different people. To my next-door neighbor, it means that he tells me about the book he just read debunking the Bible’s claims and how he threw it in the face of his “fundamentalist Bible-thumping” brother-in-law

during their last visit. To people sitting next to me on the airplane, it means either a conversation about their own church, or about how they hated their parents’ church, or about “those Muslims,” or about the topic of whatever book I’m reading or stack of student papers I’m grading. To the people at church, it means explaining that no, I’m not a seminary or Institute teacher, and no, my students are not rushing into baptismal fonts.

Being a professor of religion at a secular university like CGU

means studying *about* and *seeking to understand* religion rather than *promoting* any one tradition or its beliefs—the same way that a historian of twentieth-century

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Russia can study about and seek to understand communism without promoting international revolution. Even once that important distinction is understood, people are still a little unclear about what exactly I do on a daily basis.

They have a vague notion that professors teach classes. But truth be told, I’m only in the classroom about six hours per week (though class prep and grading takes much more

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### VISIT US ONLINE

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than that). What do I do with the rest of my time—that is, when I’m not sitting around in my tweed jacket, stroking my chin, and thinking deep thoughts?

The university, and especially the graduate university, is a place where we not only transmit existing knowledge, but also where we *create* new knowledge. Can you think of anything more exciting or fulfilling? This creation of knowledge is accomplished through conducting original research and then presenting or publishing the findings of that research. High-quality original research is often tedious and always time-consuming, especially when one strives to meet the rigorous standards of academic peer review. It often takes several years to research and write a book, and at least a few months to write a good article.

Much of my time is thus dedicated to research and writing. In the past year or two I have published a number of articles (cited below) on topics ranging from violence in early Mormonism to Mormon blogs to the relationship of faith and history. I was pleased with the publication of the book *War and Peace in Our Time: Mormon Perspectives*, which was based on an outstanding conference held at CGU in 2011 and which presents a variety of thoughtful perspectives on how Latter-day Saints approach perplexing issues of war and peace. I was similarly gratified last year when the Mormon History Association awarded an article I published in 2011 on the concept of “theodemocracy” in nineteenth-century Mormonism.

Books are the gold standard in the fields of history and religious studies. In addition to my first book, *The Mormon Menace*, published two years ago, I am currently working on multiple new book projects. My main book, which I am working on slowly but steadily, is a biography of Ezra Taft Benson, taking into account his entire life – religion and politics, family and farming. Even more slowly, I’m plugging away on a book (co-authored with BYU Idaho professor David Pulsipher) that will systematically explore a Mormon theology of peace. I am also editing or co-editing two forthcoming collections of essays, one stemming from our 2013 Mormon Studies conference at CGU which honored the vaunted academic career of LDS Council member Armand Mauss, and another that will marshal new research on Mormonism in post-1945 America.

Scholars test out and refine the ideas that eventually appear in print by presenting their work at professional conferences. Since the summer of 2012 I have worked

on accumulating frequent flier miles by participating in conferences in seemingly every part of the country, and beyond: Mormon History Association conferences in Calgary, Alberta, and Layton, Utah; the American Historical Association in New Orleans; the American Academy of Religion in Chicago; the Western History Association in Denver; a symposium of LDS national security professionals in Washington, DC; and (by videoconference) a workshop on collaborative learning technologies in Egypt.

Of course, I do teach, an activity at the very heart of the university. The Hunter Chair is designated to teach one course per semester on Mormonism, and another course on some other aspect of religion, usually American religious history. In the past couple of years I have taught courses called “Introduction to Mormonism,” “Approaches to Mormonism,” “Gendering Mormonism,” “Mormonism and Politics,” “Religion in America to 1865,” “Religion in America, 1865-present,” “Women in American Religion,” and “Comparative Global Fundamentalisms.” One of the benefits of teaching graduate students is that I often leave our classroom discussions having learned something new and interesting from them. I also spend several hours every week advising students on coursework, research, progress toward their degrees, and career goals.

Of course, the 2012 presidential election brought an onslaught of media attention, most of which has since waned. Nevertheless, the contacts I made during election season mean that I have continued to appear episodically in outlets including National Public Radio, The Daily Beast, the *Wall Street Journal*, ABC News, the *Washington Post*, KTTV (Los Angeles), and various podcasts. I have recently been interviewed or consulted for two separate documentaries on women in the LDS Church. I believe this continued presence in various media outlets is an important element of what the Hunter Chair can accomplish in terms of public education and outreach, and hopefully also brings positive attention and recognition to the Mormon Studies program at CGU.

As significant as the Hunter Chair is, it does not stand alone in the field of Mormon Studies. One of my favorite parts of the job is networking with other scholars in Mormon Studies and cognate fields. I have the privilege of serving on the board of directors for both the Mormon History Association and Dialogue Foundation (which

publishes *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought*), as well as on the steering committee for the Mormon Studies consultation of the American Academy of Religion and the advisory board for the new *Mormon Studies Review* published by BYU's Maxwell Institute. I was fortunate to gather with a "summit" of Mormon Studies scholars in Utah this past summer to discuss the future of the field and possible collaborations, and was thrilled to be present as my good friend and colleague Kathleen Flake was inaugurated as the first Richard Lyman Bushman Chair of Mormon Studies at the University of Virginia. I can confidently affirm that Mormon Studies—at CGU and elsewhere—has never been stronger, and is poised to make even greater contributions in the years to come.

If this little taste of what I do sounds enjoyable and exciting, it's because it is. Now back to work! ♦

### Selected Recent Publications

- *War and Peace in Our Time: Mormon Perspectives*, co-edited with J. David Pulsipher and Richard L. Bushman (Greg Kofford Books, 2012).
- "Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormonism),"

co-authored with Armand L. Mauss, *World Religions and Spirituality Project*, <http://www.has.vcu.edu/wrs/profiles/LDS.htm>.

- "Mormonism and Politics," Forum on Contemporary Mormonism, *Religion and American Culture* (Winter 2013): 22–29.
- "Mormon Blogs, Mormon Studies, and the Mormon Mind," *Dialogue: A Journal of Mormon Thought* (Fall 2012): 12–25.
- "'The Wars and the Perplexities of the Nations': Reflections on Early Mormonism, Violence, and the State," *Journal of Mormon History* (Summer 2012): 72–89.
- "Faith and History, Old Testament-Style," Forum on Uniting Faith and History, *Religious Educator* (2012): 142–144.
- "Visions of Zion: Changes in Mormon Social Ethics," *Christian Century* (Aug. 7, 2012).
- "God and the People: Theodemocracy in Nineteenth-Century Mormonism," *Journal of Church and State* (Summer 2011): 349–375.

## “And What Does That Mean?”

### *Unpacking the Hebrew Bible with Dr. Tammi Schneider*

BY Christie Frandsen  
Mormon Studies Council Member

Dr. Tammi Schneider sweeps into the classroom, greets her students with a brilliant smile, and before she has even taken her seat, she launches into the day's topic with irrepressible energy and enthusiasm. It feels to me as if the light in the room suddenly doubles in wattage; any lingering early morning fatigue instantly evaporates. I learned early on to have my books open and pen in hand or I would quickly be left far behind in the rapid-fire conversation that will continue without a lull for the next three hours. Tammi, as she prefers to be called, quickly puts all her students at ease with her unassuming and personable style, making me feel as if I am her new best friend. But behind that gregarious and charming demeanor is one of the world's premier scholars

on women in the Hebrew Bible. And I am lucky enough to be sitting in on her class!

Her resume is impressive and awe-inspiring for me personally. Tammi Schneider is the me I might have been had I not chosen the life of a full-time mother instead. Here's how she is described on the Claremont Graduate University (CGU) website:

*Tammi J. Schneider teaches ancient Near Eastern History, literature, archaeology and religion and also women in the Hebrew Bible. Her research draws together the varied fields of archaeology, Assyriology and biblical studies in an effort to understand the ancient Near East, especially the interactions among various peoples. She received her doctorate in Ancient History from the*

University of Pennsylvania. Her books include: *Judges in the Berit Olam series*; *Sarah: Mother of Nations*; *Mothers of Promise: Women in the Book of Genesis*; and *An Introduction to Ancient Near Eastern Religion*. She was the editor for the ancient Near East section of the journal *Religious Studies Review*, Vice President of the *American Schools of Oriental Research* and edits the series *People of the Ancient World for the Society of Biblical Literature*. She has worked on numerous archaeological excavations in Israel and is presently the head of the educational program at the Tel Akko Excavations where she excavates every year with students from CGU and the Claremont Colleges. Along with her teaching responsibilities she presently serves as Dean of the School of Arts and Humanities.

Oh, yes, and did we forget to mention that she is a wife and mother of 2 young daughters?

It seems that Tammi has accomplished the “impossible dream” for women. She has the best of both worlds: an exceptionally successful career and a richly rewarding home life. It would be easy for me to feel intimidated by someone like her, but Tammi’s genuine warmth and friendliness dispels all intimidation.

Dr. Schneider defies stereotyping. She is an outspoken feminist who is also a devoted and happy wife and mother. She is a meticulous Hebrew scholar with a delightful sense of humor. She is an ambitious and accomplished academic who takes the time to coach her daughter’s soccer team. She is a formidable critic of sloppy scholarship with a heart so tender that I have seen her weep in class.

How did I find myself studying with this world-class scholar? My passion for all things biblical was kindled by a semester abroad in Israel during my sophomore year at Brigham Young University. When I returned from that life-altering experience, I changed my major from chemical engineering to ancient scriptures and over-loaded my course schedule every semester to make up for lost time. I married after my junior year at BYU and followed my husband to Duke University where he attended law school and I enrolled in classes at the Duke Divinity School (I believe I was the first LDS student to attend there). But as soon as our first baby arrived, I abandoned my academic dreams for motherhood. I have absolutely no regrets about that choice, but I was left with a lingering hunger for all the things I never got the chance to learn. Fast forward many years, after the last of my 11 children left for college, I was invited to join the Mormon

Studies Council where I met Dr. Tammi Schneider for the first time. I shared with her my unfulfilled academic dreams and without a moment’s hesitation she said, “Well, it’s never too late! Come to my class!” That was all the encouragement I needed.

It is possible I have never been a part of a more eclectic and diverse group of people than the students who take Tammi Schneider’s Women in the Hebrew Bible class. Sitting around the table, along with a handful of bright, articulate, sleep-deprived female doctoral students hoping to follow in Tammi’s footsteps, is an impassioned Jewish feminist, a retired army veteran preparing for her second career in religious studies, a former district attorney making the leap from her lucrative legal career to follow her lifelong teaching dream. Tammi’s disciples run the gamut in age and ethnicity, political and religious affiliation, and sexual orientation. We even have a few brave men, including a delightful

divinity student from Haiti and a doctoral candidate from Jerusalem. I am the oldest, undoubtedly the most conservative, and possibly the least qualified academically. But after five minutes in Tammi’s class the differences that divide us cease to matter. Tammi molds us into a respectful and caring community of learners where all feel free to express opinions, be heard and understood, to listen and be changed. And together we are transported into the world of the Bible that Tammi opens up to us.

Her teaching style is dynamic and engaging and what I call “organized spontaneity,” with lots of twists and turns and diversions along the way of textual exploration. Tammi once said “People who speak slowly bore me” – no one is boring in Tammi Schneider’s class! She sprinkles her lectures liberally with stories of her family, social commentary, and tales of her adventures on Israeli archaeology digs or dealing with elitist snobs at academic conferences. But it is the Hebrew text which draws us all back.

Those in the class who can read Hebrew (once upon a time I would have been in that group...) take turns reading a verse of the day’s text, followed by Tammi’s favorite question: “And what does that mean?” And then the magic begins as Tammi “unpacks” each word of the text, sharing nuances and possibilities in that Hebrew word that none of us had ever known. I have had more “ah-ha” moments in Tammi’s classes than all of my other classes combined as she reveals the truer meanings of these age-old words.

Among many other academic “claims to fame,”

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*“After five minutes in Tammi’s class the differences that divide us cease to matter.”*

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[see Schneider, 6]

# STUDENT CONTRIBUTIONS

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

## Alan Clark

- "Perverted by the Most Frantic Enthusiasm: The Embrace of Spiritual Gifts in Early Mormonism," Mormon Scholars Foundation Summer Symposium, Brigham Young University, 2013.
- "We believe in the gift of tongues: The 1906 Pentecostal Revolution and Its Effects on the LDS Use of the Gift of Tongues in the Twentieth Century," *Mormon Historical Studies* 14, no. 1 (2013): 67–80.

## Jon England

- "The Great Debate: America's Pastor John Philip Newman Confronts Mormon Apostle Orson Pratt," Mormon History Association Annual Conference, June 2013.
- "Nothing So Pleases God as a Thin Body: Holy Anorexia From Tertullian's Carthage to Alpine Utah," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 2013.

## Alexandria Griffin

- "The Relief Society in Japan, 1949–1970," Mormon History Association Annual Conference, June 2013.

## Lincoln Hale

- Hugh W. Nibley Fellowship 2013–2014, Neal A. Maxwell Institute for Religious

Scholarship, Brigham Young University.

## Maclane Heward

- "Our First Mission: Advancing Mission Methodology during the 1835 Mission of the Twelve," Mormon History Association Annual Conference, June 2013.

## Chase Kirkham

- "The Pre-Adamites and the Politics of Time," Mormon History Association Annual Conference, June 2013.

## Caroline Kline

- Margo L. Goldsmith Memorial Fellowship, Claremont Graduate University.

## Richard Livingston

- Dissertation Grant, Claremont Graduate University, 2013–2014.
- Taught at California State University–Fullerton, Comparative Religion Department, "Religion and Science" (CPRL 397).
- Taught at Chaffey College, Philosophy Department, "Introduction to Religion" (PHIL 80).
- "In Pursuit of Plurality: A Response to Ayse Kadayifci-Orellana" published in

*Conversion*, Ingolf U. Dalferth and Michael Ch. Rodgers, eds. (Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2013), 69–80.

## Taunalyn Rutherford

- Taught World Religions and Book of Mormon at Brigham Young University during the summer of 2013.
- Religious Education Dissertation Grant, Brigham Young University.
- Traveling to India to conduct oral history research with Mormon and Sikh women in December.

## Rachel Hunt Steenblik

- "Kierkegaard on the Question Concerning Technology," Kierkegaard and the Present Age Conference, Brigham Young University, November 2013.
- "Heavenly Mother: The Throbbing Hunger of Women's (and Men's) Souls," Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, August 2013.
- "Through the Lens of Love: Kierkegaard's Call to See with the Change of Eternity," The Seventh International Conference, "Honoring the 200th Anniversary of the Birth of Søren Kierkegaard," St. Olaf College, June 2013.
- Summer Fellow, St. Olaf College, Hong Kierkegaard Library, June–July 2013.

## New Students Join the Program

### Maclane Heward

Maclane has been teaching seminary at Lone Peak High School in Northern Utah County for the last four years and has been granted a one year leave-without-pay to complete coursework at CGU. He completed a B.A. in Public Relations (2008) and a M.A. in Religious Education (2013) both at BYU. His master's thesis focused on the first mission of the Twelve Apostles in 1835. Maclane served a mission to Jackson, Mississippi from 2003 to 2005. He and his wife Maria have been married for seven years and have three children, two boys and a girl.

### Matthew Pitts

Matthew is from West Jordan, Utah. He graduated with a BA from Brigham Young University where he studied Political Science and Middle Eastern Studies. Upon receiving his degree Matthew traveled with his wife to Jerusalem where they lived for six months as he completed a Hebrew study program at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. After settling in Pleasant Grove, Utah for three years, Matthew decided to continue his education. He earned a law degree from the Benjamin N. Cardozo School of Law, the law school of Yeshiva University, in New York City. Matthew also earned a concurrent MA in Modern Jewish History from Yeshiva. Matthew is currently enrolled as a PhD student in the History of Christianity and Religions of North America program. His areas of interest include the intersection of law and religion, including the historical effects of changes in the legal system on religious doctrine and practice within American Christian and Jewish congregations. He is also interested in the comparative study of Judaism and Mormonism. He served a LDS mission in Venezuela, Maracaibo. He and his wife Jaime have three young sons: Simon, Eli, and Lot.

### Jeffrey Turner

Jeff grew up in Redwood City, California. He attended Washington State University, where he graduated with a B.A. in philosophy and a B.A. in religious studies. While at WSU he converted to Mormonism. Jeff is a first year Master's student in the general religion program. His research interests include nineteenth-century European emigration, pamphleteering, and international transfer of ideas. He and his wife Lexie currently live in Upland, California.

## Schneider, *continued from page 4*

Tammi is perhaps best known for her original approach to textual analysis which she calls “Verbing the Characters.” She carefully looks at the verbs which are attached to each female character – verbs that each one does and verbs that are done to her. By this simple yet brilliant and ingenious technique, she has discovered aspects of these women that no one has ever seen before. These women spring to life before our very eyes as we look carefully at what they did and what was done

to them and allow those actions to speak for them, to once again give them a voice that has been silenced for far too many centuries. As I listen to what these women have to say to me, a 21st century woman whose life is both dramatically different and surprisingly similar to theirs, I am overwhelmed with what I hear and what I have learned and how I have been changed. My newest best friends are these magnificent ancient women, some of whose names were never even recorded, but whose lives have made an indelible

imprint on my heart: Lot's wife, Hagar, Tamar, Jael.

With the inimitable guidance of Dr. Tammi Schneider, I am learning to unpack these ancient sacred stories where I have discovered a world populated by very real women – a delightfully diverse array of women with passions and problems very much like my own, who met the challenges of their lives with courage and grace. These women have now become friends and sisters who inhabit not just the pages of my scriptures but a place in my heart. ♦

# Thanks to Our 2012–2013 Donors

Claremont Mormon Studies represents a unique opportunity to create wider worldwide understanding and appreciation of Mormonism. In his 2007 endorsement of the Howard W. Hunter Chair of Claremont Mormon Studies, Elder Jeffrey R. Holland remarked that as President Hunter considered ways in which the Church could be better understood beyond the language of faith, he had a vision of secular academic centers fostering a better understanding of the Church through the language of scholarship. If President Hunter “were alive today,” said Elder Holland, “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 six years, we’re pleased to report that President Hunter’s prophetic vision is now coming to fruition. Last year, thanks to the support of generous

donors, nine new students were able to enroll in the Mormon Studies program at Claremont Graduate University. Together with these students, the current Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies, BYU and Notre Dame-trained Dr. Patrick Mason, who has been called upon to provide his insights in diverse settings from the White House, to the Wall Street Journal, to National Public Radio, to the academy, is producing world-recognized, cutting-edge scholarship and commentary on Mormonism. The first recipients of Claremont’s Robert L. Millet Fellowship, Taunalyn Rutherford and Clayton Christensen, are exemplars of this flourishing academic environment.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the following individuals who donated to the Claremont Mormon Studies Program and the Howard W. Hunter Foundation during this past year:

## \$500,000 or above

- Roy and Carol Christensen

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*We did our best to include all 2012–2013 donors, but we apologize in advance for any oversights and request notification of any donors inadvertently left off or listed incorrectly. For any corrections, please email Christie Frandsen at [christiefrandsen@gmail.com](mailto:christiefrandsen@gmail.com).*

# The Critical Comparative Scripture Program and Mormon Studies

BY Andrew Smith

PhD Student, Critical Comparative Scriptures

As I am, at the moment, the sole member of CMSSA who is pursuing a degree in the Critical Comparative Scripture program at CGU, I have been asked to give some insight into that program and how it relates to Mormon Studies.

The Critical Comparative Scripture (CCS) program can be, in many ways, exactly what the average person probably thinks when they hear the words put together. Yet, at the same time, it is also something completely different, more complex and theoretically driven, expanding beyond simply looking at the Scriptures of one tradition in comparison to those of another.

Theoretically, this program is based on critical self-assessment within discursive formations accomplished by analyzing closely the underlying power structures, hierarchies, and unspoken (perhaps unrecognized) forms of that discourse. This involves asking some of the most basic questions, such as: what are you, as a member of said discourse, doing? Why? What does it mean that you are doing it this way and not another? The answers are compared to other formations to assess descriptive and relative differences, helping to further develop understanding of the whys and hows of both formations. The term “scripture” comes to refer, then, to the “texts,” both written and

unwritten, which provide the basis for the whys within that discourse. In this sense, little-s “scripture” is a categorization of texts, objects, and discursive norms that determine the forms and functions of that discourse. It is a broad category that includes big-S “Scripture(s),” commonly understood as the holy writings or canon of a given religious tradition.

In a similar way, the CCS program is also broader than simply the discourse of comparative religion. It is concerned with “scripturalization,” or the way in which the “script” or “text” (the words, language, politics of discourse, etc.) constructs and is transformed into the formation itself, or the phenomenon that underlies and governs how we view the world around us, our place with in it, and how we function therein. In this sense, CCS fully encompasses the study of religion as one determining factor in this process. However, it also extends beyond the scope of what is normally defined as religion to include many other fields or subfields. For example, the study of “nationcraft” or how a national discourse will use symbols, signs, and language (such as flags, mottos, pledges of allegiance, uniforms, education, etc.) to socialize and condition its citizens by imparting values (such as freedom, the rule

of law, respect for authority, etc.). In short, CCS examines not only what scripture is but what it does for us and what we make it do for us, whether we are conscious of such action or not.

This theoretical lens can be of use in Mormon Studies in discovering and analyzing the norms, attitudes, and texts that govern Mormon discourse. Perhaps it could be said that Mormon Studies is uniquely situated to be primed for such study. Because Mormonism acknowledges an open canon and a broader definition of scripture as that which is spoken or expressed by those with authority “when moved upon by the Holy Ghost” (D&C 68:4), Mormons are potentially more open to the understanding that differing “texts” can be authoritative and functional, to differing degrees, in their formation and identity, than someone, for instance, who subscribes to the idea of *sola scriptura*. Mormons can take authoritative cues, not just from the Standard Works, but also from the Church hymnals, from the words of latter-day prophets and apostles, from articles in the *Ensign*, from rituals and ceremonies, from patriarchal blessings, and from other unspoken or unwritten sources. Thus, Mormon Studies as a discipline may benefit from examinations of these specific “texts”

and how they have influenced and continue influencing the development of Mormon discourse and individual spirituality.

It is in the category of seeing ritual as scripture or authoritative text that determines, socializes, and influences our religious formations, where I will be headed with my dissertation in regard to Islamic and Biblical ritual. Past works

notwithstanding, ritual remains, in many ways, an open field for academic study, especially as a factor in the growth and ongoing development of religious traditions and formations. This is especially the case in Mormonism, where it is doctrine that “in the ordinances (i.e., rituals) thereof, the power of godliness is manifest” (D&C 84:21), and the tradition could potentially

benefit from scholarship in this manner. While there are many aspects of CCS that could be seen as problematic (and some I have my issues with, theoretically and spiritually), there are approaches and theoretical lenses found in CCS that could be of use in and shed light on Mormon Studies. ♦

## The Vibrancy of Mormon Studies at CGU

BY Alan Clark

*President, Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association*

As a member of the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association, and as a student at Claremont Graduate University over the last year and a half, it is wonderful to be able to see and participate in the vibrant academic life at CGU. The growing impact of the Howard W. Hunter foundation can be seen throughout the last calendar year. Last March, Patrick Mason, Howard W. Hunter Chair of Mormon Studies, organized a conference in honor of Armand Mauss, a long time scholar of Mormon Studies and instrumental developer of the Mormon Studies program here. During the conference, students and visitors enjoyed the opportunity to hear from Richard and Claudia Bushman, Jan Shipps, Paul Reeve, Matthew Bowman, and many other stellar

scholars. Through the last year and a half, we have been honored to meet with many other scholars and discuss their works, such as Terryl Givens, Joanna Brooks, David Campbell, John Turner, Reid Neilson, Michael Quinn, Laurie Maffly-Kipp, and others.

There is no better place to engage in Mormon Studies than CGU. Yet what that means is somewhat elusive. Many people hear that I attend CGU, so they assume that I am getting a PhD in Mormon Studies. That is not exactly how our program functions. In my opinion, three unique opportunities for students exist because of the Howard W. Hunter foundation of Mormon Studies at Claremont Graduate University.

First, CGU is a focal point for the creation of Mormon Studies as

an academic discipline. Scholars engaged in research are often invited to make presentations. Patrick Mason offers a course on some aspect of Mormonism each semester. The conversation continues from the classroom to the Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association lunch meetings where students are able to present current research they are doing and receive feedback from others. That research gets presented at local and national conferences which reinforces Mormon Studies as an academic discipline and creates more awareness of the LDS Church and Mormon culture in history and the modern world. CGU is at the forefront in promoting and promulgating Mormon Studies in the academic world.

Second, master's students and

[see **Vibrancy**, 11]

# Expanding Our Circle of Influence

BY Lincoln Hale

Vice President, Claremont Mormon Studies Student Association

In 2011 I began my search for PhD programs. There were several schools and programs on my radar but Claremont Graduate University was not one of them. I was the only Mormon at a markedly liberal graduate school of theology. My focus was ancient biblical studies and I was particularly interested in biblical languages. At this time, the Mormon moment was in full swing and by virtue of my membership in the LDS Church I became, (and I must say, without merit), the resident authority on all things Mormon. I was surprised at how many people, both colleagues and professors, wanted to hear a Mormon perspective in our class discussions and also in my research papers. This led me to write and/or present on topics such as the canonization of both biblical and modern scripture, Deuteronomical legal cases compared with Book of Mormon legal cases, Mormon perspectives on various books of the Bible, and more.

As I was in the beginning stages of finding the right PhD program, a colleague, knowing I was a Mormon, emailed me a link to a presentation delivered at a conference held at Claremont Graduate University in March of 2011. This conference eventually turned into the incredible publication: *War and Peace In Our Time: Mormon Perspectives*, co-edited by our very own Patrick Mason and Richard Bushman. This conference, and the fact that it was available to me online, not only put CGU on my radar but set me on a course to learn more about the university's programs, and more specifically its Mormon Studies Program.

In my search, I came across the [claremontmormonstudies.org](http://claremontmormonstudies.org) website and began by reading every back-issue of this, the Claremont Mormon Studies Newsletter. It better acquainted me with Dr. Mason, Dr. Bushman, Dr. Armand Mauss, Dr. Karen Torjesen, and others who pioneered and propagated the Mormon Studies Program here at CGU. Almost immediately, I contacted Patrick Mason and he graciously answered every question I threw his way. I eventually saw Dr. Mason present research at the AAR National Conference in San Francisco in November of 2011. At that same conference, I also met Dr. Tammi Schneider, several CMSSA students, and many others at CGU's reception. I felt well-connected to the school but Dr. Mason's

availability to me especially helped me to feel wanted by the school and needed in the Mormon Studies Program.

I mention all this, not simply as a reminiscence, but as a reinforcement of the importance of making our program widely-available. The Claremont Mormon Studies (CMS) website ([claremontmormonstudies.org](http://claremontmormonstudies.org)), the CMS sponsored conferences available online and eventually as publications, the CMS Newsletter available in print and online, and the Howard W. Hunter Chair's availability to interested individuals not only played an important role in bringing me to CGU but also, and more importantly, continues to attract remarkable students, accomplished scholars, and generous donors to Claremont.

Claremont is now a major center for Mormon studies. Mormon scholars want and need to come to Claremont to present their work. CGU provides a setting that supports, critiques, and promotes Mormon studies scholarship in ways other venues cannot. In seeing the potential of our program, Jeffrey R. Holland said that Howard W. Hunter believed a Mormon Studies Program at CGU "could greatly impact scholars, opinion leaders, and public policy-makers, ultimately from all over the world." This is a challenge, I believe, we are taking seriously. Elder Holland also said that "President Hunter 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." Amazingly, CGU has blazed a trail that others are still following, including the University of Virginia, which recently created its first ever Chair of Mormon Studies, appropriately named after CGU's inaugural Chair of Mormon Studies, Richard Lyman Bushman. CMSSA students are presenting and publishing original research. Conferences, both regional and national, are now holding more Mormon Studies sessions and panels than ever before. No longer crutched by political candidacies, Broadway productions, nor in vogue media fads, the academic study of Mormonism is not only standing on its own two feet but proliferating. While our presence is growing stronger, we must continue to expand our circle of influence by providing outstanding scholarship and making it even more widely-available. ♦

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## Vibrancy, *continued from page 9*

doctoral candidates are able to include Mormon Studies as an emphasis in their degree programs. There are currently students at Claremont working on degrees in English, Women's Studies, American Religion, Critical Comparative Scriptures, Ancient Christianity, Politics, and Philosophy of Religion and Theology, who have integrated some aspect of Mormon Studies into their individual programs. The emphasis on Mormon Studies included in their programs of study informs their individual research in new and fascinating ways, while highlighting the significance of Mormon history and culture as it relates to American and international history and culture.

Third, CGU creates a diverse community of scholars and ideas within the field of Mormon Studies. Mormon and non-Mormon students are able to discuss facets of Mormon Studies together in an open academic environment. While this does occasionally happen at other universities and places like Brigham Young University, it does not occur as often as it does at Claremont Graduate University. The variety of disciplines and perspectives brought to the table from each student allows for the cultivation of new directions in Mormon Studies and the refinement of old ones. The general faculty at CGU are more informed about Mormonism than at most other universities, and they too incorporate considerations on Mormon history and culture into their research as they work with their students. It is an amazing atmosphere for anyone interested in

entering Mormon Studies.

Some people have asked me how it is valuable to pursue Mormon Studies outside of the universities in Utah? A comparison with BYU may help understand the value of the CGU Mormon Studies program. BYU and CGU serve different purposes. BYU strengthens personal spirituality and trains students on how to incorporate their personal beliefs into their everyday lives. Because the student body of BYU is predominantly LDS, it mainly offers a devotional perspective on Mormon Studies. CGU provides an opportunity for students to study Mormonism through the more general framework of academic discourse. It allows them to learn about different narratives and perspectives outside of the traditional Mormon narrative, which are often not available in a devotional setting - not because these narratives are antagonistic but because CGU caters to a more diverse body of students. The study of Mormonism benefits from both members and non-members evaluating it as an American religious culture and as the burgeoning international faith it has now become. Both schools offer vital and helpful programs. Yet only since the creation of the Howard W. Hunter foundation for Mormon Studies has an academic setting like CGU existed. As Mormon Studies continues growing and academic approaches to it proliferate, Claremont Graduate University will maintain its central place in the field, thanks to the generosity and interest of all those who have contributed in the past, and those who contribute now and in the future. ❖

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