

# Claremont Mormon Studies

## NEWSLETTER

Fall 2014  Issue 11

## The Continuing Relevance of Mormon Studies

*We're certainly not in 2012 anymore, but Mormonism continues to make the news.*

BY PATRICK Q. MASON    HOWARD W. HUNTER CHAIR OF MORMON STUDIES

I admit it. I was wrong. After Mitt Romney's loss in the 2012 presidential election, I thought that was the last we would hear from Mormonism in the national media for a while. Given that every news article or feature mentioning Mormonism during that year was in some way really about Romney, I figured that Romney was the real story, and Mormonism only a curiosity for journalists desperate for an angle. As soon as Romney was out of the picture, I supposed, Mormonism would be too. I had full confidence that Mormon Studies would continue as an academic field, but guessed that it would lose its relevance to the current news cycle.

We're certainly not in 2012 anymore, but Mormonism continues to make the news. Not just local news, or Utah news, or the LDS Church-owned *Deseret News*, but also national and international news including the likes of the *New York Times* and NPR. In the past two years we have seen high-level

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media coverage of faith crises among members (and some leaders) of the LDS Church; passionate debates over women's ordination, centering in the controversy over Ordain Women and culminating in the excommunication of movement leader Kate Kelly; and the Church's new transparency in a series of essays on traditionally vexing historical and doctrinal issues such as Joseph Smith's polygamy, the race-based priesthood-temple ban, and Mormon undergarments.<sup>1</sup>

These stories are difficult for many Mormons to understand or talk about, and all but incomprehensible to outside journalists trying to decipher what's going on. In each of these cases journalists have reached out to me and to other well-informed Mormon Studies scholars for understanding and perspective. It has been a productive and symbiotic relationship: scholars are able to apply their hard-won expertise to informing the general public, and journalists working on a deadline are able to get the story straight. Those reading, listening to, or watching the news stories come out better informed, both about the particular issue and about Mormonism's place in the broader culture.

So I was wrong that Romney's loss would mark the disappearance of Mormonism in the media. It turns out that Mormonism has become part of the national (if not quite global) imagination. For reasons that run deeper than any particular election cycle, Mormonism both captures and speaks to certain elements in the American psyche. Rumors of Mormonism's demise and its spectacular growth have both been exaggerated, but the religion and its people remain a steady presence and will continue to inform and reflect the national conversation. And Mormon Studies scholars will be crucial in helping make sense of it all.

Even though I was too quick to write Mormonism's obituary in the national media, I do think I was right about one thing. As I wrote back in November 2012, "The worth of what we do in the academy cannot be measured simply by popularity or media attention. While the Mormon Moment

no doubt helped raise a modicum of awareness of and respect for Mormon Studies, in the end the field must stand on its own two feet.... At the core of the university is the presumption that certain intellectual and aesthetic pursuits simply have intrinsic worth. They are not worthy because they are tied to politics, or to the latest Broadway hit—they are worthy because they are part of the human experience. At its best the academy protects the human value that we can dedicate ourselves to the study of something simply because we are drawn to it. Some things are just good, some things are just beautiful, some things are just interesting, for no greater reason than they simply are."<sup>2</sup>

At Claremont Graduate University we continue to lead the charge in Mormon Studies, especially in terms of training graduate students who will be tomorrow's scholars and teachers. The media will keep calling—and heaven help us if Romney throws in his hat again in 2016. But in the end Mormon Studies matters most of all when it tells us something about the human condition, and that matters whether or not it shows up in the news. 🔗

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1. For examples, see <http://www.thedailybeast.com/witw/articles/2013/04/11/mormon-women-face-off-over-right-to-priesthood.html>; <http://bigstory.ap.org/article/mormon-woman-awaits-decision-excommunication>; <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865613981/Polygamy-essays-provide-information-about-early-LDS-Church-2-and-current-leadership.html?pg=1>; <http://www.deseretnews.com/article/865604750/LDS-blacks-scholars-cheer-churchs-essay-on-priesthood.html?pg=all>; <http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2014/10/mormon-underwear-revealed/381792/>.

2. <http://www.juvenileinstructor.org/guest-post-patrick-mason-why-romneys-loss-is-good-for-mormon-studies/>.

# Claremont's Mormon Studies Mission

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*“The goal ... is understanding; we don't expect everyone in the world ... to agree with us, but we would like people to understand us.”*

— Jeffrey R. Holland, *Meet the Mormons Premiere*, October 7, 2014

BY STEVE BRADFORD

HOWARD W. HUNTER FOUNDATION VICE CHAIR

CLAREMONT MORMON STUDIES COUNCIL CHAIR

With approval from the First Presidency, the Howard W. Hunter Foundation is honored to stand on the broad shoulders of the 14th president of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We are also honored by our association with Claremont Graduate University, which operates one of the world's elite graduate programs in religion, and is the only university awarding doctoral degrees to students specializing in Mormon studies.

Claremont's Mormon Studies program encourages academically qualified scholars—whether Mormon or not—to come study the history, theology, and culture of this relatively new religious tradition. Its graduates pursue careers at BYU, CES and beyond, where they widely disseminate an accurate picture of Mormonism.

Claremont shows the value of examining Mormonism from both faithful and scholarly perspectives. While the faith of Church leaders, missionaries and my BYU alma mater are of the utmost value to me personally, Claremont's scholarly approach is also crucial because, in the worldwide court of public opinion, it's correctly regarded as informed and unbiased.

Last month we saw some of this first hand, as Deseret Book CEO Sheri Dew packed Claremont's 2,000-seat Bridges Auditorium to address and answer pointed questions about how Mormon women channel the blessings of heaven. This event underscored Claremont's magnanimous willingness to

make room for Mormon voices. Indeed, after writing a ground-breaking book entitled *When Women Were Priests*, Claremont's then School of Religion dean, Dr. Karen Torjesen, invited the Mormons and several other historically marginalized faiths with whom she has periodically disagreed to join what she calls “the master narrative.”

In the few years since Mormons joined Claremont's academic discussion, these new narratives include a Sandy, Utah native named Patrick Mason, who now leads Dr. Torjesen's Department of Religion, and Claremont's Mormon Women's Oral History Project, where scholars are collecting, cataloguing and publishing the stories of a previously silent majority of rank-and-file Mormon women across the globe.

These and other compelling Mormon narratives are emerging thanks to Claremont's willingness to include us at the academic table (while saving money on the wine). Our Mormon Studies mission, as articulated by Elder Holland at last month's *Meet the Mormons* premiere, “is understanding; we don't expect everyone... to agree with us, but we would like people to understand us.”

Faithful Latter-day Saints like me and many of you are critically important to this pioneering academic adventure. Our first allegiance will always be to the Church we love and the causes it champions. But with the Church under greater scrutiny, including Claremont within our circle of causes is greatly expanding the world's understanding of

cherished Mormon values.

Elder Holland had us in mind when he observed: “The Lord’s work ... goes forward through the inspiration and spontaneous service of [its] lay members.... The Mormon Studies program at Claremont is at the forefront of this movement.... This is an emerging and important way in which the Gospel of Jesus Christ is going forward.”

Soon after completing the Hunter Chair endowment, Roy and Carol Christensen have continued to lead the way by creating and most generously donating \$500,000 to the Robert L. Millet Fellowship for Claremont scholars seeking BYU and CES careers. We’re now working to double their generosity (and received a major boost last month from Don and Jette Laws).

In addition, we’re working to endow a companion \$1,000,000 fellowship for students eying Mor-

mon studies careers outside of CES. This new fellowship honors two prime catalysts of the Hunter Chair, Joseph and Marilyn Bentley, who have now taken their prodigious talents to the Newport Beach Temple as its new president and matron.

We’re also grateful to several who’ve pledged \$10,000 a year for five years to help fully endow these crucial student fellowships. We’re hoping others will join this noble quest to raise a million dollars from 20 families pledging \$10,000 a year for five years. It’s not Herman Cain’s 9/9/9, but it is Howard Hunter’s 20/10/5—please join the fun!

We’re indebted to these and other inspired investments assuring the Church we love has a permanent chair at the academic feast. Thanks to you, the leading edge of your beneficence is already out teaching and enhancing the world’s appreciation for Mormonism, with many more to come. ☺

## The 2014 CGU–Tanner Humanities Center’s Summer Dissertation Fellowship

*With this fellowship, The Mormon Council at CGU has created a fabulous support for PhD candidates in Mormon Studies, working to complete their dissertations.*

BY ELISA PULIDO

I had the privilege this summer of being the first recipient of the CGU/Tanner Humanities Summer Dissertation Fellowship in Mormon Studies. The eight weeks I spent at the Tanner Humanities Center forwarded the writing of my dissertation by providing me with a stipend, a workspace for research and writing, and by placing me in close proximity to important archives.

The most gratifying part of the experience, of

course, was the access I had to a greatly increased number of documents pertinent to my research. My dissertation is about the spiritual evolution of Mexican Mormon dissident, Margarito Bautista (1878-1961). It uses Bautista’s life as a lens through which to view the convergence of Mormon evangelization, Mexican nationalism, and indigenous religious improvisation in the Mexican/U.S. borderlands during the early twentieth century. In

(SEE FELLOWSHIP, PAGE 7)

# Thanks to Our Fall 2014 Donors

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We extend our deepest gratitude to the generous donors without whose contributions there would be no Mormon Studies Program at Claremont Graduate University. Here are the pioneers of Mormon Studies in the academic world:

We did our best to include all our wonderful 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 notify Christie Frandsen at [christiefrandsen@gmail.com](mailto:christiefrandsen@gmail.com). 

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## New Students

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### April Makgeong

April Chabries Makgoeng began producing documentary films on religious topics while teaching in the Theatre & Media Arts Department at Brigham Young University. In 2006, she left academia to produce documentaries for National Geographic Television in Washington, D.C. Now based in Los Angeles, she is an interdisciplinary PhD student in Religion and Cultural Studies with an emphasis in film. In the summer of 2015, April is looking forward to spending more time in her husband's hometown of Gaborone, Botswana doing research with the CGU Women Studies in Religion program. Along with other scholars, she will be gathering oral histories of LDS women living in Africa.

### Randy Powell

Randy Powell ([randal.powell@cgu.edu](mailto:randal.powell@cgu.edu)) is currently an MA student in the History of Christianity and Religions of North America program. He earned his BA from Brigham Young University–Idaho in History with a Humanities minor in 2014. His many interests include Mormon studies, American religious history, and European religious history. He lives in Claremont with his lovely wife Heidi.

(FELLOWSHIP, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4)

1945, Bautista established a utopian community 22 kilometers outside Mexico City where polygamy and the Law of Consecration were practiced. My dissertation examines the political, ecclesiastical and personal forces that drove Bautista's movement from a zealous convert in Mexico to a temple in Salt Lake City and finally to a utopian dissident.

Significant archives in and around Salt Lake City useful to my project include the LDS Church History Library, the LDS Family History Library, the Special Collections at the Marriott Library (University of Utah), the Utah State History Archives, Special Collections at the Harold B. Lee Library, and the Salt Lake City Public Library. As my dissertation focuses on Mormonism as a transnational movement on the U.S. Mexico borderlands, two other resources were crucial to my research: The Mexican Mormon History Museum in Provo, and the Mexican Consulate in Salt Lake City, Utah.

Librarians and archivists at the LDS Church History Library are available for consultations with scholars, and were very supportive. The consultation I had with Matt Geilman, head researcher over Latin America holdings, was quite valuable. Once familiar with my project, archivists at the Church History Library were able to recommend sources for research and emailed me when they discovered others. One archivist shared contact information for interview subjects. While certain documents (particularly those that deal with excommunications or temple rituals) are closed to public viewing, Church archivists did their best to petition for open access to the resources I requested.

Staff members in Special Collections at both the Harold B. Lee Library and the Marriott Library were also helpful. I was surprised by how willing the Mexican Consulate (a very busy place) was to help me answer questions about Mexican/U.S. relations in Salt Lake City during the early twentieth century. The community outreach coordinator

made enquiries for me on specific questions with archivists and researchers in Mexico.

The expenses I incurred during the fellowship were for room and board, copying, and travel. As there is little or no overlap in the documents housed at the various libraries and archives in Salt Lake and Provo, some travel was necessary. I had a car with me, but Salt Lake has an excellent bus system, and TRAX trains now run between Salt Lake and Provo.

The Tanner Center itself is quiet during the summer. Many of the faculty members are not on campus and summer events at the Center are extremely limited. It was not a time for making scholarly acquaintances, but the atmosphere allowed for concentrated work on my dissertation in a sleek, relatively new office space with a computer. In speaking with other recipients of fellowships at the Tanner Center, the office space is one of those perks most sorely missed at the end of the fellowship.

The staff at the Tanner Center is very friendly and supportive. I was informed that most Fellows stay in their offices, but the staff appreciates an occasional conversation and an update on how my research was coming along. Dr. Robert Goldberg, the Director of the Tanner Humanities Center, was provided useful insight on the presentation of Mormon themes to the larger Religious Studies community.

With this fellowship, The Mormon Studies Council at CGU has created a fabulous support for PhD candidates in Mormon Studies, working to complete their dissertations. I did feel a sense of loss walking away from that beautiful office at the end of my fellowship, but I am at least six months closer to the completion of my degree than I would have been without this opportunity, and I am grateful. Thank you so much to CGU's Mormon Studies Council. ☺

# Waterworks in the Holy Land

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*At the end of June I boarded my first international flight headed to Israel. My purpose: learn the methods of archaeology, the history and culture of Israel and experience the “Holy Land.”*

BY MACLANE HEWARD

I typically wear a smile and would describe myself similar to Joseph Smith in that my native temperament is usually very “cheery.” My wife has even questioned me at times, wondering if I have unhappy emotions. While taking two academic courses in Israel this summer, she witnessed my more “alien” temperament: sadness.

At the end of June I boarded my first international flight headed to Israel. My purpose: learn the methods of archaeology, the history and culture of Israel and experience the “Holy Land.” After an 11 hour flight over the Atlantic Ocean, we landed in Tel Aviv with cheers of excitement. We then drove two hours north to the small city of Akko. Located on the north side of Haifa bay, Akko is one of the oldest continually inhabited sites in the world, with evidence dating back to the Early Bronze age, or 3000 BCE. Weekdays were spent digging at the site of the ancient city of Akko and weekends were spent visiting other important his-

torical sites in Israel.

Though the experience proved to be intellectually expansive, the greatest observations (and the real growing/educational experience) for me came in unexpected ways. During the first week I became fast friends with my roommate, Ahiad, an Israeli graduate student in archaeology who had been hired to help manage the dig. During the same week, three Israeli teens were buried after being kidnapped and murdered. Early in the morning on the day after their funeral, Mohammed Abu Khdeirhe, a Palestinian teen living in Jerusalem was kidnapped and murdered as well.

My friendship with Ahiad grew simultaneously with the escalation of the Israel-Gaza conflict of this summer. With the hours spent together, we discussed many different issues from pranks pulled during archaeological excavations, to Middle-Eastern politics; from Religion and Mormonism to sports; and from violence in Israel to purchasing

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wheelbarrows for the dig.

Over time, Ahiad shared his strong feelings of distaste for military service. It was clear from my conversations and experiences with him that he cared about people. One example will illustrate the point. I turned 30 while in Israel and Ahiad assumed correctly that I would rather have celebrated that occasion with my wife and three children (he could safely assume this after three weeks of me waking him up daily at 4:15 AM as I tried to quietly leave the room and Skype with my family). The week of my birthday, after finding out that our trip to Jerusalem was canceled due to the conflict, Ahiad invited me to go with him to his apartment in Jerusalem. He would keep me from unsafe areas and take me to see the sites in the city. I could not be more excited! We would leave the day after I turned 30.

In true Ahiad form, cakes were purchased for my birthday and he brought them to the archaeology dig for us to enjoy. At the end of the day, he gathered a group of people together and we played volleyball until late, something he knew I would also enjoy.

Early the next morning I approached him to in-

form him that during my ritualistic morning Skype with my family I had received “approval” from my wife for our Jerusalem trip. My heart split in two as he informed me that he was unable to go—he had been activated in the Israeli army and would be leaving within a few hours for the military base outside of Gaza. After a 20 minute sobbing phone call to my wife, she was convinced I could feel and so was I.

In the academic study of religion, we often discuss the “other” and learn from how the majority reacts to and associates with this group. This informs our understanding about society and religion. When we get close enough to those who are different culturally, politically, religiously, racially or otherwise, we learn that we are all connected in one great humanity. This closeness and understanding, whether it be to a person or a history, allows for strong feelings of consideration to come naturally. For this Mormon, learning from one Jew has brought deep feelings of yearning for understanding and a peaceful cohabitation with all humanity. Perhaps academic understanding is the beginning of that process. ☯

# Adam Miller on “Early Onset Postmortality”

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*It's possible to die while you are still alive; it's possible to survive your own death and remarkably to be all the more alive for it.*

BY CHASE KIRKHAM

On September 18, 2014, Latter-day Saint Theologian Adam Miller delivered a captivating lecture on experiencing a kind of time where one could escape not only the worries of the future but also the regrets of the past. Calling this phenomenon “Early Onset Postmortality,” Miller described a condition where one dies yet remains alive: “it’s possible to die while you are still alive; it’s possible to survive your own death and remarkably to be all the more alive for it.”

Such a condition, caricatured by the lives of zombies and vampires, is taken seriously by the Apostle Paul who writes to the Galatians that “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live.” The experience that Paul describes is salvation in the present; that is, salvation in this life rather than in the next. Therefore, Miller instructed, “to experi-

ence salvation is to experience a kind of Early Onset Postmortality.”

Extreme examples of Early Onset Postmortality that Miller noted are John the Beloved, the Three Nephites, and those who have had their calling and election made sure: they have had their judgment day but continue living. Such people, however, are “dramatic” examples of “what ordinary repentance, forgiveness, and life in Christ were meant to look like all along.” Repentance, therefore, is the way to experience Early Onset Postmortality. And when one experiences Early Onset Postmortality through repentance, one is able to perceive time in a different manner, for in a penitent life, the past becomes “pliable and redeemable” and the future sheds its fear. ☯

## Online Video

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Watch Adam Miller’s presentation online by visiting:

[http://youtube.com/watch?v=\\_UBqIbyuF\\_Y](http://youtube.com/watch?v=_UBqIbyuF_Y)

For more Mormon Studies videos, see our official YouTube channel:

<http://youtube.com/user/CGUMormonStudies>

LECTURE EVENT SUMMARY

## Sheri Dew on “Women in the Church”

*Women are absolutely vital to the organization of the Church [and] are wired into the very center.*

BY RANDY POWELL

Women have been involved in the Church since the beginning,” declared the popular LDS author Sheri Dew to a crowd of roughly two thousand people in the Bridges Auditorium, located on the Pomona College campus in Claremont, California. Accepting an invitation from the Howard W. Hunter Foundation, Dew came to Claremont on October 11 to talk about Mormon women.

Dew is the CEO of Deseret Book, was formerly Second Counselor in the General Relief Society Presidency, has been the author of numerous books including two biographies of past presidents of the Mormon Church, and most recently wrote a book entitled *Women and the Priesthood: What one Mormon Women Believes*. Men and women, adults and children, Mormon and non-Mormon, all filled the auditorium to hear the well-known author, speaker, and leader talk about the role of women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Although Dew stated that she is not troubled in any way about women and priesthood ordination, she stressed that she has studied the topic extensively. In her speech, entitled “Women in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” Dew argued that women have always played an essential and vital role in the Church, thus leaving the question of their ordination a moot point. “Women are absolutely vital to the organization of the Church,” she said. She also emphasized that although women are not ordained to the priesthood in the Church, both men and women have access to God’s power, which by definition is priesthood power. Despite the differences between men and women in the

LDS Church, men and women have access to the same spiritual authority.

Dew also emphasized that the Church provides women with more opportunities for leadership than any organization she has seen. In response to a question from a reporter about how she deals with the “oppression” of women in the Church, she responded that there is no organization she knew of that treated women as such a vital part of the organization as does the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Dew illustrated this by showing pictures of all the female leaders in the Church and how they counsel with the highest priesthood leaders in the Church. In regard to temple access, male priesthood becomes an obstacle. However, women can enter solely based on worthiness. Thus, Dew taught that “women are wired into the very center” of the Church.

The audience responded remarkably; she addressed them with confidence and humor. The greatest thing, however, that Dew did to endear herself to the audience is to admit the limits of her knowledge on the subject. More than once, Dew reminded the audience, “There are just a lot of things I don’t know.” She did not pretend to have all the answers to questions about why women are not ordained to the priesthood or why there is not more discussion of a Heavenly Mother. Her candor and honesty made her an accessible friend to both Mormons and non-Mormons alike. At the conclusion of her lecture the audience arose and gave her a robust, standing ovation. 🕒

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