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'Mormon intercessions' draft paper.

Dear All,

Thanks very much for being well to discuss some of my work in progress in your meeting; I look forward to it, and will welcome your thoughts on what is, I'm afraid, very much an early draft.

The chapter you have here 'Mormon intercessions' is provisionally chapter three of a monograph on my work with American Latter-day Saints. The working title is *The Religion of Kinship; Mormon sacred family in modern America*.

I started this research quite a while ago in 2001. Since then, I have published a number of articles and chapters ( 2005; 2007; 2010; 2013a and b ) which variously use the exceptionalism of Mormonism to rethink problems in the anthropology of Christianity, religion, ritual, secularism and kinship. In particular, I find Mormonism's commitment to a monistic ontology (a refusal to treat matter and spirit as each others' opposites) helpful in illuminating where we tend to make assumptions about the 'obvious' divisions between categories of experience in the modern world.

This kind of argument will be developed towards the end of the book, where I want to continue to question the 'secular' status of kinship in America, considering the ways in which Mormon kinship thinking has affinities with as well as differences from other sorts of movements and traditions.

The earlier parts of the book all contain material which I have never published, including the chapter attached here.

This is mainly based on my fieldwork with a ward in an upstate area of New York, close to where Joseph Smith originally founded the church in the 1830s; however, all Latter-day Saints were later driven West, so that this point of origin is now a 'marginal' place in Mormon spiritual geographies.

One attempt in these chapters is to write about Mormonism in a slightly different and more ethnographic way. Often, accounts of LDS thinking describe it either in terms of its historical development, or else in 'ideal-typical' ways which tend to emphasise the assumed homogeneity of 'Mormonism' as doctrine and practice. The church leadership's own recent turn towards hyper-orthodoxy has heightened the perception that all Mormons think the same thing (ie, what they are told to think) - although the LDS audience and readership/web presence etc is powerfully aware that this is not true. So this ethnography is an attempt to reflect a more 'lived Mormonism' and its ambiguities, doubts, selective silences and forms of religious work. An additional issue is that there is an immense and complex Mormon scholarship on Mormonism - which, however, is not widely read in other circles, thus creating difficulties (for me!) of knowing how much background need to be included/what is obvious etc. This book, though is for anthropologists and isn't aiming to occupy Mormon studies ground, although I hope it will interest some LDS readerships.

Thanks and best wishes, Fenella.

This is very much an early draft