THE CHRISTIANITY OF ANTHROPOLOGY⋆

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This article critiques the way in which the discipline of anthropology has construed Christianity, arguing that too narrow and ascetic a model of Christianity has become standard and questioning the claims of the 'secular' social sciences to have severed themselves entirely from their Christian theological underpinnings. The article is in conversation with other writers on related themes, including Jonathan Parry on Mauss's *The gift*, Talal Asad, John Millbank, and Marshall Sahlins. Here, however, established anthropological assumptions on topics including transcendence, modernity, asceticism, and genealogy are reconsidered through a fieldwork-based examination of American Mormonism, a religion which posits relationships between the mortal and the divine that are unique in Christianity. Despite their strong belief in Christ, Mormons have often been labelled as 'not really Christian' by mainstream churches. It is argued here that such theological position-taking is echoed in the social sciences and that this reveals some of its (that is, our own) unrecognized orthodoxies.

A map of Mormon heaven

It's an October day in Utah, and I'm sitting in a Ford service station in Taylorsville, one of the less wealthy southern suburbs of Salt Lake City. In the background there are continuous tannoy announcements paging the mechanics. I am sitting on the lawn in front of the service station with Patricia Johanssen, a devout member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints (henceforth LDS), or 'Mormons'; the grass is rather wet because it's watered by the sprinkler systems which are used everywhere in the city to keep the desert at bay. Typically for Salt Lake, beyond the lush green turf is a view of freeway intersections, strip-mall developments, and the dusty grey-brown of the sage brush and desert on which the city is built. To our left (as we face south) are the Wasatch Mountains, already capped and gleaming with snow, forming a barrier along one side of the city. Patricia and I are waiting for her elderly car to be serviced, and talking about heaven.

There's a pause in our conversation before I ask, 'How do you imagine heaven? How do you imagine the Celestial Kingdom?' 'Ha!' says Patricia, right away: '*Busy*!' and she gives a rueful laugh. 'Um, we're told, there's a prophecy at the end of the *Doctrine and Covenants* that we'll still be teaching and doing. I figure I'm stuck, I'll be a teacher all my life … !' Then she looks around, beyond the service station, towards the mountains, and adds: 'For me, I picture

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it, … there's got to be beauty … I figure there's got to be! Christ wouldn't have invented all of this stuff for us only to enjoy it a little while … I'm sorry but [that mountain] will still be around!'

A few days later, I'm sitting in the comfortable and pretty kitchen of another active member of the Church, Ruth Byrne, in a small Mormon town south of the city. After admiring the layout of Ruth's new house, I ask the same question: 'How do you imagine the Celestial Kingdom?' 'I think it'll be just like this world, only more wonderful,' answers Ruth, without hesitation, adding 'because … I don't think there'll be any heartache … but everything that we enjoy here, … we'll enjoy there, I know we will!'

Now, the responses of Patricia and Ruth were typical of Church members both in emphasizing the ceaseless activity which Mormons expect to charac-terize their heaven and in stressing its closeness to this mortal and physical world. Different individuals look forward to enjoying different things from this life in the next life; for Patricia, a teacher, mathematician, and musician, there will be music, colour, beautiful landscapes, and the opportunity to talk Rela-tivity to Einstein. Ruth remarks light-heartedly, but still meaning it, that there will certainly be chocolate, but no struggles with weight, in the Celestial Kingdom. Such thoughts are not mere wishful thinking for Mormons, but are individual readings of a doctrine which fully justifies them; for in Mor-monism, the Celestial Kingdom will literally *be* this world, our world, but it will be our world perfected, or, as Church members say, 'transfigured'. As such, Mormon heaven will acquire new qualities as yet only partially known to us, but the only qualities which it will lose are those of suffering and adversity; chocolate, therefore, may quite possibly remain.[1]

Whatever the particular qualities they hope for in the Celestial Kingdom, all Latter Day Saints are quite certain[2] about what they must do to get there. To gain heaven, Mormons must 'endure to the end' the trials of mortality, lead a Christian life, and obey God's commandments. In particular they must attend sacred rituals held in Mormon temples, imposing and beautiful struc-tures which only worthy Church members may normally enter.[3]

The reward will be 'exultation' in the Celestial Kingdom, the highest state of the Mormon multi-tiered heaven. Here, married Mormon couples will be possessed of Celestial Bodies of super-refined matter, and will use them to 'have eternal increase': that is, to conceive, birth, and raise children forever.

The first point that I want to convey, then, is that Mormon heaven par-takes of the present life in a way which makes it natural and intuitive for Church members to look around them and think of the Celestial Kingdom as their world's development, not as its opposite. No member of the Church actually thinks that there will be Ford service stations in heaven; indeed, the greatly superior methods of transport which will be available there are a subject of much interested speculation among Mormons of a certain cast of mind. Above all, it is the question of the *social* organization of heaven which intrigues many Church members.

This is not simply that recurring figure of Christian heavenscapes, the City of God (cf. McDannell & Lang 1990: 74). Indeed most people to whom I spoke rejected outright the idea that heaven might be a city.[4] Instead they spoke of loose settlements, always emphasizing their organization around the *family*, for Mormons are also promised that they will spend eternity with their

kin. Patricia, whose family has a long history going back to the pioneer days of the Church, offered a specific model for this from her own experience. What she had in mind, she said, was the kind of arrangement her wider family had at their summer house up in the mountain canyons when she was growing up. The house had originally belonged to her great uncle, a former President of the Church. When he got older, he kept the house as a holiday place for his children and grandchildren. As time went on, more children were born and the family extended the house, building out in all directions, so that eventually there was a kitchen and a sleeping porch for each branch of the family. However, the central areas of the house remained in common, focused on the original patriarch. The families would cook and eat and sleep with some degree of privacy, but share talk, entertainments, musical and religious evenings, and get to know each other well.[5] Finally the widening 'clan' had needed to build annexes on adjoining lots, but the property was still held by a family organization, in trust.

Not all my Mormon friends and acquaintances had this kind of background, or used this same model, but Patricia's explanation captures very well the vision of nuclear-family-within-extended-family with which almost all mainstream Church members would concur. This sense of the Celestial Kingdom as the realm of 'clans' is one selected aspect of the phenomenon I want to convey in opening this lecture: in Mormonism, 'kinship' and 'religion', the material and the immaterial, are coextensive, not contradictory. The example of Mormonism, I shall argue, is more than just a passing curiosity. Its unusual properties may in fact suggest ways to re-examine anthropological thinking about both Christianity and kinship.

Parry and *The gift*

It is customary to begin a Malinowski lecture by in some way linking the subject under discussion to the works of the great anthropologist for whom this series is named. In the present case the genealogy of ideas is not a direct one.[6] Rather, any merit this talk may have owes a great deal to three previous Malinowski *lecturers*: Maurice Bloch, João de Pina Cabral, and, in particular, Jonathan Parry. I should also perhaps make clear that the arguments I will offer here represent one stage in a long process of my own thinking and research on related topics.[7]

In this lecture theatre in 1985 Johnny Parry delivered a reassessment of Mauss which has remained surely the most brilliant reading of *The gift* yet in print. He argued that Mauss's essay had been improperly understood as an attribution of base motives to the exchange institutions of primitive societies. Rather, he reasoned, Mauss had been proposing that it was only in modernity and in the West that the ideology of exchange ever *claimed* to create a separation of 'the free gift' from 'business'. The conditions for this ideological split were attributed by Mauss largely to the development of capitalism (cf. Dumont 1985). To this conclusion, Johnny Parry added a final, and extremely important, qualification. The articulation of an 'elaborated ideology of the "pure" gift', he suggested, demanded the 'specific type of belief system' (Parry 1986: 467) of a salvationist world religion which places an emphasis on the

idea of charity and alms, constructed as 'free gifts'. As Parry explains, 'the notion of salvation itself devalues this profane world … The unreciprocated gift becomes a liberation from bondage to it, a denial of the profane self, an atonement for sin and hence a means to salvation' (1986: 467). Such a *contemptus mundi* expresses itself, among other forms, in the asceticism of Hinduism, Buddhism, and Christianity as practised by religious specialists and lay people alike.

While phrasing his argument to encompass all the world religions, Parry leans ethnographically on cases from Indian Hinduism. However, following Troeltsch, he accords a particular *historical* importance to Christianity, the otherworldliness of which, he suggests, produced a focus on ascetic practices which later fed into the thinking of the West. The kind of Christianity which Parry described in his lecture is a Christianity focused on the ascetic. It has been widely argued that in Christianity, whether Catholic or Protestant, disdain for the flesh and for the material world fosters in various ways a dualistic vision in which the material, and the here-and-now, is radically opposed to the spiritual and to a heaven in which physical pains and pleasures will cease to matter and another order of experience altogether will replace the material.

This formulation raises some complex questions. For the moment, however, I want to ask a simple one. What if, instead of a form of Christianity which insists on the opposition between this world and the next world – the material and the spiritual – you have a form of Christianity which does not? What happens to various anthropological 'givens' if you have, instead, a strikingly different form of Christianity – one, say, in which heaven is a 'busy' place full of people teaching, eating chocolate, holding family house parties, and having babies deep into eternity?

The Mormon 'repugnant Other'[8]

It was partly with this sort of question in mind that I decided to attempt some fieldwork with American Mormons. Naturally I had no reason to think that everyone would have chosen this topic for themselves, yet I was unprepared for the outright horror which the suggestion aroused in a number of my colleagues. Some, worried about my safety, kindly sent me newspaper cuttings about the various scandals in which the Mormon Church is said to have been involved. Others, conversely, were astonished that I should have chosen such an oustandingly dull subject. Surely, they reasoned, the Mormons were an utterly robotic and homogeneous bunch controlled by a central church system? Still others were apparently gripped by feelings of involuntary disgust. What lay behind these reactions? Let me discuss two examples.

My fieldwork was spent partly in Salt Lake City, Utah, the Church's heartland, and partly in upstate New York, where the Church originated in the 1830s but where it is now a minority presence. While in New York State, my husband and I often visited friends and colleagues at Cornell University, which is how he came to be explaining my research project to Terry Turner at dinner one evening. On hearing that I wanted to work with the Mormons, Terry expressed the by-now familiar incredulity, and then exclaimed, with some

force, 'You'll never convince me that those people are *really* Christians!' Since Terry is a Marxist anthropologist and as far as I know currently claims no Christian faith,[9] this remark had a certain piquancy. It was a response which I was often to meet during my fieldwork.

The second remark was made, also at Cornell, during a long and interesting discussion with my much treasured colleague and friend, Jim Siegel. I was explaining to Jim that almost all the Mormon Gospels[10] are understood by members of the Church as being one or another form of inspired translation made by the religion's founder and first Prophet, Joseph Smith. I remarked that Mormonism did not seem to envisage any of the problems of 'untranslatability' which have preoccupied Christians of other cultures and other periods in relation to sacred texts.[11] Jim responded that this was precisely the quality in Mormonism which he found so offputting; in assuming that everything could be 'translated' to another register, Jim said, Mormonism lost sight of the knowledge that everything has a unique and unreplicable origin and that one thing cannot be seamlessly substituted for another without the loss of authentic experience. In this sense, Jim added darkly, Mormonism was the arch-enemy of the *appelation contrôlée*.

In general, the range of reactions I encountered highlighted for me what an uncanny object Mormonism is in our popular culture and (outside specialist Mormon Studies circles) perhaps particularly for the academic social sciences. It is represented as at once unworthy of serious interest and as a scandalous threat − a threat, in particular, to those distinctions which should be made between authentic and inauthentic experience and between authentic and inauthentic Christianity. Why, I wanted to ask, should this be so?

The Christianity of anthropology

Part of the answer to this question, I would suggest, comes from the relationship between the discipline of anthropology and Christianity in general. I have long found in my own research an uncomfortable gap between my fieldwork experiences of how people account for their own Christian practice and the theoretical models of Christianity which prevail in anthropological accounts.

The kind of view expressed by Parry, that Christianity is essentially and universally an otherworldly and ascetic religion, is widely assumed in anthropological writing. Since Christianity is the religion of a god who is at best intermittently present in the world of immanence, it is characterized as an 'impossible religion', in Hegel's sense (Hegel 1975 [1807]): that is, many of its practices are understood as attempts to compensate for the appalling distance which is felt to be placed between man and the Christian God (see Cannell in press-*a*).

Let us take here the example of Pina Cabral's wonderful ethnography of Portuguese peasant Catholicism in the Minho of the 1980s (Pina Cabral 1986). The Minho produces its own local saints, known as the saints of 'incorrupt bodies'. These are persons who, a number of years after burial, are found not to decay in the grave; after testing for authenticity by the priest, their mummified bodies are displayed in glass coffins in local chapels. Pina Cabral,

following the more general theories of Maurice Bloch on ritual, argues that these cults epitomize a popular attempt to overcome the contradictions in Christianity. Christianity devalues the body, disdains sexuality and fertility, and celebrates the life of the spirit and the life to come in the next world above all. It is a religion of transcendence. Life must be lived in this world, however, and, as farmers, Minhoto people value ordinary human and animal fertility as the direct source of earthly life. So they generate oxymoronic figures of the incorrupt body – an image of bodily persistence 'in purity' – to try to make these ends meet. However popular such cults might be, he implies, the essential 'impossibility' of Christianity remains unchanged behind such inventions.[12]

This convincing account of Minhoto thought, however, did not work at all in the Philippines, where I conducted my earlier fieldwork. Local Catholic practice in the area where I lived is centred on an image known as the 'dead Christ' which represents Christ's body taken down from the Cross and laid out in a glass coffin. Superficially, this might seem very similar to the body cults of Portuguese saints. These images, however, are not cadavers but statues carved out of wood. They are said to have been found as lumps of driftwood and to have developed human characteristics after having been 'adopted' and cared for like children by local families (Cannell 1999: chaps 8 and 9).

When I described European Catholic 'incorrupt bodies' and reliquaries to Filipinos, they found the idea both hilarious and disgusting. Moreover, the Bicol people with whom I lived are very little interested in the idea of heaven and hell or in mainstream Catholic constructions of a transcendent world in which God lives. Neither the idea of the withdrawal of God from the world nor the Portuguese 'solution' to the ascetic opposition between flesh and spirit seems to have much purchase in Bicol. Now this lack of fit might be explained away by arguing that, in the Philippines, local Southeast Asian ontologies have simply managed to 'resist' the inherent logic of ascetic Christianity. Although this might not be untrue, it never seemed to me completely satisfactory because it still presented such a one-dimensional view of what Christianity was, and did, and because other kinds of examples of 'poor fit' can also be found, as we shall see, in 'the West'.

I began to suspect that the idea of Christianity as a universally and essentially ascetic and other-worldly religion had embedded itself, unrecognized, in aspects of anthropological theory itself, or, to put it another way, that the model of Christianity we have might be over-selective. I have argued in detail elsewhere (Cannell 2005; in press-*a*) that, despite the existence of distinguished ethnographies on Christian areas, there has been a tendency to avoid or under-theorize the subject of Christianity or to assume that its meanings are 'obvious' because they are part of the culture from which anthropologists themselves are largely drawn. Where Christianity *was* theorized, I found, the approach tended to stress its ascetic components above all else and to assume that it would be premised on an antagonism between body and spirit. Finally, there was an assumption, drawn largely from certain readings of Weber which were rather less subtle than Weber's own texts, that Christianity was important mainly or only as a harbinger of secular modernity.

In Weber's famous account of *The spirit of capitalism and the Protestant ethic* (Weber 1992 [1904-5]) we are given a historical interpretation of seventeenth-

century European capitalism in which Puritanism is presented counter-intuitively as contributing to the process of secularization. This view of modernity depends on reading Christianity as above all an ascetic religion, because it is through the world-rejecting categories of Puritanism that, for Weber, capitalism's 'worldly asceticism' takes shape. Whether Catholic or Protestant, it is argued, this Christianity has been significant largely as a kind of herald of its own demise, an early symptom of the onset of the modern world. The modern world, Weber tells us, is a world of ideological forms – such as the vocation – from which the original religious meaning has been evacuated.

Weber's historical study has often been read as though it were intended to be both universal and predictive, and the trajectory Catholicism-Protestantism-secular capitalism has become established in our folk categories as well as our academic ones. Yet the logic of this folk reading is circular; it assumes not only that Protestantism always displaces Catholicism, aids capitalism, and precedes secularism, but also that for this reason secularizing Protestantism is the most important form of Christian thinking and one on which social science should focus. The upshot is a narrowing of attention which ignores the complexity of what Christianity is.

For this and other reasons, I have argued elsewhere that Christianity has functioned in a range of ways as anthropology's theoretical repressed. Related points have been made by John Millbank (1993) and Talal Asad (1993), while Marshall Sahlins (1994) has also outlined some intriguing parallel arguments. Retracing the notion of 'scarcity', which dominates economic anthropology, back to patristic formulations of the idea that Man has been thrown out of Eden and must ever after live by the sweat of his brow, Sahlins argued that anthropology had been heavily influenced by the kind of Christianity which emphasizes man's fallen nature. As a part of this logic, we find again and again the idea referred to by Parry (1986) as 'asceticism': the inferiority and sinfulness of the body compared to the soul.[13]

Such insights lend support to a very important general point. Anthropology and sociology both founded themselves as 'secular' disciplines, emphasizing the intellectual break with theology. The idea of an absolute break is a misleading one, however. The complex relationship between Christian theology and anthropological theory, a perception of which still lingers in early theory, was increasingly backgrounded as time went on. Anthropology came to believe without much qualification its own claims to be a secular discipline, and failed to notice that it had in fact incorporated a version of Augustinian or ascetic thinking within its own theoretical apparatus, even in the claim to absolute secularism itself.

This is the more striking given that it is, in fact, also misleading to describe even mainstream Christian theology as *only* ascetic in character. As historians like Peter Brown (e.g. 1981; 1988) have shown, one can more accurately understand Christianity's ascetic theology as evolving in tension with contrasting strands of Christian thinking on the physical. Some of these came to be labelled as 'heresy'; others were simply backgrounded within orthodox teaching. To take only one case – but one crucially important for our argument – the bodily resurrection of all believers at the end of time is an article of faith for all Christians to this day as in the earliest Church. Judaism, Islam, and Zoroastrianism also have a doctrine of bodily resurrection, but in this

they are distinct from the other world religions – including Hinduism and Buddism – which do not. Perhaps Parry's original argument was here slanted by his Hinduist expertise in that he failed to foreground the inevitable ambivalence towards the body which this doctrine establishes in Christianity. The Christian body cannot be all bad, even for ascetics, for it will be returned to us in heaven, although in fixed and 'incorruptible' form.[14] Yet Christians have often found in this teaching a quandary and even an embarrassment (as well as a miracle); it has lost ground in the popular imagination to the present-day stereotype of heaven, as a place of 'anti-embodiment', of spirits, and of angels.[15]

At this point, it should be clear that it becomes rather difficult to answer the kind of question so intriguingly raised by Parry about the role that Christianity played in contributing to the ideology of capitalism. The question is rendered unwieldy by the fact that Christianity in anthropology is understood as being both an entirely ascetic religion, and something quite different from anthropological theory itself. In fact, neither of these assumptions is wholly true. And, I now want to suggest, they raise particular problems when we come to consider Christian attitudes towards kinship.

Bodily resurrection and Mormon exultation

The undoubtedly powerful ascetic current in Christianity has generally been accompanied by an attitude to ordinary family life and kinship which regards it as, at most, a kind of second best to the spiritual life. The most obvious examples come from monasticism. Monks and nuns give up their earthly kin for a celibate devotion to Christ and to their new *spiritual* 'brothers' and 'sisters'. There are also many examples from Protestant traditions. Like John Bunyan's pilgrim, a man may be called upon at any moment to abandon his family in favour of the more urgent obligations of a search for the means of his own salvation.

As we saw at the outset of the lecture, however, Mormonism takes a very different tack. For Mormonism the perpetuation of kinship ties from this world is what makes heaven heaven. The hope of being united with your loved ones in heaven, of course, is not unique to Mormonism.[16] Only Mormonism, however, makes that hope a guarantee and also suggests not only that there will be a resurrected body in the next world but also that this body will still be capable of reproduction – of engendering children – in eternity. Ruth Byrne told me of an experience while visiting a Mormon temple at a time when her hopes for another child had been disappointed. She had noticed an oil painting on the wall of a mother surrounded by children playing at her feet and had had an intimation that her mothering was not over – that it would be resumed again in the next life. Being a modest person, she did not read this as an absolute promise; the attainment of exultation depends on much in this life. The image, however, and the longing stayed strongly with her. Most Mormons must have wondered also, as Ruth tells me she does, just what sex will be like in heaven. Mormon doctrine gives no precise answer to that question, but babies in heaven are a certainty, a promise given in prophetic revelation.

Now Mormonism is not devoid of what we would ordinarily recognize as ascetic aspects. In theory, at least, most sexual activity beyond hand holding is banned before marriage – a rule attested to by the fact that many Mormon engagements last no longer than six months because, as someone put it to me rather pithily, 'everyone's too horny to wait any longer'. These and other sexual restrictions, indeed, cause some Church members a lot of agonized reflection.[17]

Mormonism, though, does something different with these ideas than what is normally supposed to be the case in anthropological accounts of ascetic Christianity. It does not teach that, as St Paul says, 'it is better to marry than to burn' (I Corinthians, 7: 9) or that celibacy is a purer state of life. Instead, it requires all Church members to marry, preferably in a Mormon temple and to other Church members, and to have as many children as they can reasonably support. And sexual pleasure within marriage is considered very proper. At least in theory, one cannot attain the highest levels of the Mormon Celestial Kingdom without temple marriage, which causes some anxiety among single Church members as to whether and how the Heavenly Father will provide them spouses in the afterlife.[18]

Indeed, it is through the continued bearing of children that Mormons will achieve the highest blessing of heaven and become, in their turn, like the being we know as God. For Mormons, God was once a mortal as they are now while they may one day become an exulted being as God is. God, or Heavenly Father, is far, far ahead of humans in attainment, but He is not utterly different in kind from mortals. Humans, continuing to give birth to children in the Celestial Kingdom, will send them out into new worlds of their own making just as Heavenly Father once sent them out into this world. If all goes well, those children in their turn will one day also become exulted beings. As one distinguished Mormon put it to her female audience at Church Conference, 'We stand in awe at Mary's assignment to be the mother of the Lord, but we, too, have been called to *mother gods*' (Foulger 1980: my emphasis).

Not only, then, is heaven in Mormonism a radically physical and reproductively driven place, but also the body, even in its mortal and earthly form, is crucially necessary for salvation. For Mormons, the body is not the enemy of the salvation of what Christians usually call the soul; in order to be saved, one must have a body on earth and in the Celestial Kingdom.[19]

The importance which Mormons attach to this point is illustrated by the problematic exception of the Holy Spirit, who remains in disembodied form in order to do the special work 'assigned' to him by Heavenly Father and by Christ. One evening, over dinner, I asked the local missionaries in upstate New York about this anomaly. How come, I asked, one of the good guys never gets an earthly body? Wasn't that unfair? How could he ever return to Heavenly Father? One of the young men was also interested in this question. After consulting with their Mission President, he brought me back the answer a week or so later. 'Speculatively', I was told, they thought that the problem was being solved by a sort of a relay-race system. At different points in history the role of the Holy Spirit would be fulfilled by different individuals, prior to their mortal life. These would only be the most advanced souls, of course; the people who on this earth would go on to become, say, Moses or John

the Baptist. At a certain point each individual would be called to go on to his earthly vocation and would then 'hand over' the role of Holy Spirit to another great soul for the next epoch, and so on. The person who had finished his shift as the Paraclete could then begin his corporeal life and so eventually attain the Celestial Kingdom. This idea underlines how essential to salvation, for Mormons, is the possession of a body.[20] Indeed, the only individuals who never acquire a body are – in fact – Satan and his demons (cf. Mitchell 2001).

It will perhaps by now be apparent that the Mormon Church does not make a radical distinction between matter and spirit, any more than it makes an absolute distinction between mortals and divinities. 'We do not believe', as Barbara Ash put it to me rather strikingly, 'that God does anything supernatural'.

Genealogy, paperwork and weeping

Let's go back for a moment to my fieldwork in upstate New York. It's spring, and a Mormon neighbour, Paul Alder, has come round to the house to read the Mormon Scriptures with me and give me some instruction in doctrinal questions. He's doing me a favour, and he's also, of course, engaging in a form of missionary work. We've been following the section then under study in the Church's Sunday School programme, *The pearl of great price* (Smith 1981), a book full of some of the most profound and mysterious articulations of Joseph Smith's religious vision. Amidst the many complex and arcane questions which set my mind reeling during these lessons, I was rather startled to find my teacher calling my attention with great insistence to passages such as this genealogy;

> 10: And Adam lived one hundred and thirty years, and begat a son, in his own likeness, after his own image, and called his name, Seth …
> 13: And Seth lived one hundred and five years, and begat Enos … and taught his son Enos in the ways of God, wherefore Enos prophesied also …
> 17: And Enos lived ninety years, and begat Cainan …
> 18: And Enos lived, after he begat Cainan, eight hundred and fifteen years …
> 19: And Cainan lived seventy years and begat Mehalaleel …
> 20: And Mehalaleel lived sixty-five years and begat Jared …
> 21: And Jared lived one hundred and sixty-two years, and begat Enoch …
> 22: And this is the genealogy of the sons of Adam, who was the son of God, with whom God, Himself, conversed (*Book of Moses* 6: 10-22).

'This kind of passage,' said my teacher, 'might *look* kind of dull, routine, but it isn't'. And I was even more struck to see him later with tears standing in his eyes; 'I can testify', he told me, 'that … these are some of the most powerful and moving passages in the whole of Scripture'.

To explain why Paul Alder would weep at the sight of such scriptural passages,[21] I need to ask the reader to suspend disbelief on an issue which is, for anthropologists, perhaps even more taxing than the attempt to envisage celestial bodies. For I need to ask you to believe that genealogy, that most unfashionable relic of anthropological kinship studies, is both a crucial theological issue in contemporary Mormonism and a vital tradition of spiritual *practice*.

Genealogy has been theologically key, of course, since Mormonism's early days. Sucessive revelations of the Church's Prophets allowed for the salvation of the deceased, and above all of deceased relatives, through vicarious baptism for the dead in Mormon temples. The dead can be offered, and will frequently accept, the chance of salvation. Church members must construct a genealogy, going back at least three or four generations, checked according to fixed criteria laid down by the Church.[22] Only then can proxy temple work be started, ritually connecting family members for eternity. Mormons should also supplement this genealogical research with 'family history', and many families have a considerable archive of privately printed documents; some also have family websites. In order to assist with this work, the Church has compiled one of the largest actual and on-line genealogical libraries in the world, and stores millions of copies of microfilms of parish and other demographic records in an underground vault carved out of the rock in Granite Mountain, Utah.

Now, for Mormons, there are several relevant aspects of lineage. One is the lineage of family trees as we would understand it, on both mother's and father's sides. A second is the lineage of spiritual authority. Mormons believe that they are the recipients of a restored set of priesthood powers, given to Adam, passed down through the Old Testament patriarchs, held by Christ, but lost at the time of the conversion of Constantine to Catholicism[23] (an apostate faith from the Mormon viewpoint) and only restored one and a half thousand years later to Joseph Smith in the 1830s.

The ideal is that the transmission of kinship and the transmission of spiritual authority should be absolutely melded, as in Old Testament tribalism. Priesthood powers should be ritually passed down through time in an unbroken succession from one worthy man to another. Additionally, many Mormons consider themselves to be the actual, lineal descendants of the lost tribes of Israel.[24] There is, however, a further conflation: in Mormon baptism even Gentile blood is thought to be physically transformed so that Mormons of any origin whatever become through baptism one blood with Abraham and with each other.[25]

Genealogical and temple work re-creates that situation, as it were, backwards. Because Mormons can be baptized for their dead ancestors, they can extend Mormon conversion, the creation of eternally guaranteed kinship links, and the unbroken transmission of the priesthood from one generation to another retrospectively through time towards their very distant ancestors.

One might think that Mormons would be keenest to emphasize the notion of ancestors who have a long and unbroken history in the Church. Yet it is equally common to find people describing the first converts in their family line as 'born of goodly parents' or coming from a line of virtuous people. Church authorities explain this by suggesting that Heavenly Father set aside or 'foreordained' specially virtuous souls, those with an ability to hear and understand true religion, to be the parents of converts to the Church. Converts have inherited their 'teachability' – and their right to exercise priesthood power – from their parents. This in turn implies that those parents in some way 'chose the right' path in what is called the 'pre-existence'. The qualities inherited refer back to a pre-mortal life, in which our bodies were not as they now are. It is often popularly thought that spouses, parents, and children chose

each other pre-mortally and find each other again in this world. For this reason, Mormon ideas of inheritance even between parents and children cannot be understood as based wholly on 'biology' or physical transmission as we normally understand it. Although Mormons teach that we are all, ulti- mately, the literal children of God, one could, from another perspective, say that the production of earthly kinship is the consequence of agency as much as 'biology' in the life before this one.

Why then, we can now ask, did an apparently dry passage of scriptural genealogy move Paul Alder to tears? Weeping is certainly not unusual with Mormons. It is a sign that the Holy Spirit is working in a person, infusing them with Christlike love. It is especially appropriate for Mormons to weep when discussing genealogy and family history because they are religiously commanded not just to trace but to love their kin, including those distant dead ancestors whom they have never met. Mormons are haunted by the prophesy that Elijah must 'turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers' (Malachi 4: 4-5) if the earth is not to be smitten with a great curse.

In part this love is shown by vicarious baptism through which people lit- erally help to 'redeem' their own kin. What this misses, however, is the pow- erful sense in which the genealogical work is itself an act of both religious and kinship love. Tracing family trees is intensely bureaucratic work, and incomplete or imperfectly compiled records will be rejected by the Church. The methodologies of genealogy remain extremely routine, a fact which is only underlined by the computerization of much family history work and the ways in which the Church encourages its members to do the work by issuing new, user-friendly software. The juxtaposition of the numinous and the banal is well illustrated, for instance, by the cheery flyer and cover blurb for a popular recent guide by Paul Larsen (2003). 'Take your ancestors to the temple!' it proclaims, 'the new, exciting, fast way! … Now you can do the … temple work you've always wanted at home in your pajamas! … Including a guide to TempleReady©' – this last being the title of the Church's computer program for checking genealogy submissions.

Despite all this, what keen Mormon genealogists stress about the process is its spiritual and affective aspects. They often describe looking for a particular individual who is hard to locate in the records as a form of 'rescue'. Susan Hunt recalls tracking down the records of a little girl who featured anomolously without her parents in a census. Eventually, Susan was able to discover that the child's mother had left her in her uncle's care when the mother went West with the Mormons, hoping perhaps to send for her later. However, the young mother died before she could be baptized into the Church, and her daughter never saw her again. Susan's work posthumously reunited mother and child. Many other individuals, especially on her mother's side, seemed to be crying out to her from beyond the grave for the same kind of care: 'So when I found someone I'd start crying like, it's a long lost child of mine that had been, you know, missing'.

In this case Susan felt she had only solved the genealogical puzzle with the help of her dead kin. From 'beyond the veil', as Mormons say, the dead reach out with clues and 'promptings' to urge the living to find them. Many Mormons have an impressive grasp of hundreds of people within their family trees. At

one point I tried out on Susan David Schneider's assertion from *American kinship* (1980) that mother's side kin are more readily forgotten because of the many changes of surname involved in tracing links through women. 'Yeah', replied Susan, undaunted, 'well, certainly doing this indelibly prints it in your mind. I mean, I *know* these people. It just takes me looking through my files'.

It is through this kind of experience that some Church members say they have changed their understanding of genealogy. As Susan's sister, Jo Chambers, told me, for years she had thought genealogy a waste of time, but 'gradually I came to the conclusion that eternity operates by the same standards as the earth does … and that by sweating a little bit over something, by making a small sacrifice, you really gain a lot'. In other words, the practice of genealogy is a form of sacrificial 'work' in which Mormons gain immutable bonds to their dead kin through love. Indeed, for Mormons there is no contradiction between genealogy's bureaucratic and its sacred aspects; in Mormon Scripture, genealogy begins when God inspires Adam and Eve with a gift of writing so they may record their descendants.

One final, cosmic outcome of genealogical work would be to demonstrate that all human beings belong to a single 'family of man'.[26] Before the world can be transfigured into the Celestial Kingdom, Mormons expect that this vast task of making and recording every 'welding link' back to Adam will be completed. Where ancient records are lost to us, I was told, genealogical data will be recovered during the millennium with the assistance of specially appointed resurrected beings – divine accounting, indeed.[27]

'Families forever' and the question of secularization

The meeting point between the sacred and the routine may not always be where we think it is. The LDS Church may be a vast modern institution, but it is also a Church of living prophesy and personal revelation, where individual and direct experiences of the divine are common and powerful. Mormons see no necessary contradiction between the bureaucratic and the spiritual, but feel a strong pull towards both. This becomes especially important in the context of debates about the relationship between Mormon kinship teachings and modernity.

The Mormon doctrine that, given the right observances, 'families can be together forever', even beyond death, is an immensely popular and powerful idea both among Church members and in missionization and conversion. The Church is fully aware of the value of this doctrine as a public-relations tool. Go, as many tourists do, to the South Visitors' Center in Temple Square, Salt Lake City – which was revamped to an extraordinary level of polish in preparation for the 2001 Winter Olympics. You will admire the beautifully planted flowerbeds, and the glistening walls of the Salt Lake Temple, carved with sunstones, but with its vast doors closed to all except worthy Church members. Then you'll be encouraged by the sweet pairs of lady missionaries who staff the Square to enter the Visitors' Center. Just inside the entrance is an archway containing a darkened seating area where you are confronted by a sombrely shot film loop showing a scene of family chaos. The family in the film are white Americans in a house that could be your home, or mine. The baby is

crying, the parents are trying to get to work, and the kids are trying to get to school. Tempers fray, various necessary objects are missing, breakfasts are not getting eaten, and harsh words are exchanged. The teenage daughter wails: 'Does anyone even *care* if I miss my bus?' (she does miss her bus). It's a trivial scene in a way, but it's also one that grabs you, and makes you feel embarrassed and sad that you too are often not at your best with the people closest to you. No-one at the breakfast table seems to be a demon, or even a villain. Yet the film manages to suggest that conflict, confusion, even violence, lie in potential in such family squabbles.

Beyond this is a large, light space. To one's right are a sequence of rooms, painted white and with plain, unobtrusive fittings; several of these contain a table and chairs, and are marked 'Teaching rooms' and 'Strengthening the Family'. There's the sound of a baby crying from the video, and the bustle of people moving about, but as you pass further into the main hall, it's suddenly quiet and peaceful.

To the left, the side wall of the building consists of a huge plate-glass window, giving a spectacular view of the long south side of the Temple – pale and beautiful in the bright autumn sunshine and crenellated like some strange fortress – which projects a sense of restfulness, solidity, and order. The framing of the Temple in the vast window is emphasized by the seating arranged in front of it: three separate bays of sofas, easy chairs, and little tables are set out with plenty of space in between each. The effect is enhanced by the luxuriousness of the fabrics, all in a soft, calming sage green woven in a subtle leaf pattern. Actually the space deliberately recalls one kind of room – the Celestial Room – *inside* Mormon temples, but most non-Mormons will not recognize this. They only know that the way the Temple is framed for visitors to sit and look at in comfort somehow powerfully suggests the idea that the inside of the temple is there too, just out of sight, behind the closed doors.

All these effects are, of course, supremely calculated, and Church members themselves are capable of taking a wry attitude to some of them. Even one of the earnest young missionaries once remarked to us that the Church's 'Families Forever' video was 'kind of cheesy … No, I shouldn't say that, it's good, it's important stuff. But I guess it *is* a little cheesy also'.

Many of the Church's critics have seen more in this kind of promotional emphasis than a sentimental taste. Some think the Church is 'hiding' its real doctrines behind what is broadly acceptable, while others claim it may be abandoning its own roots for the Protestant mainstream. A contrast is drawn between the current Mormon view of eternal kinship and that of the mid-nineteenth century when Mormons were, notoriously, a polygamous Church.[28] Without entering this debate, it can be observed that some social-scientific discourse inserts this view into a highly teleological framework. Because the institutional power of the Mormon Church is so evident, and because it makes intensive use of modern forms of administration, finance, technology, and communications, the tendency is to assume that these must be signs of an incipient secularization. Once again, the assumption is that with capitalism ascetic Protestantism will become the dominant form of Christianity and that Protestantism itself will inevitably produce secularism.

My own research did not support this view. I found, rather, that Mormonism's own most distinctive inheritance was what both drew new con-

verts into the Church and kept Church members there even when some of them found difficulty with broader Church policy. The appeal of the Church's promise of personal contact with the divine continues to be crucial to Church members, although some Church leaders see in individual revelation a potential conflict with the standardization of doctrine for which they aim.

Genealogical ontology, ascetic modernity

In this lecture I have been emphasizing aspects of Mormon doctrine which would be unfamiliar to those versed in mainstream Christianity. The account I have given might appear at first simply to justify the opinion expressed by Terry Turner, that Mormons cannot be counted as 'really Christians'. To the anthropologist, however, a 'real Christian' must mean anyone who seriously so describes him- or herself. To proceed otherwise is to pre-judge what the content of a religion might be on the basis of highly selective, and historically particular, canons of orthodoxy.

Mormon ideas, although deeply Christocentric, certainly go far beyond what most Christians would recognize. From an orthodox point of view, the Church call to its membership to 'redeem your ancestors' through genealogical and temple work sounds very much like an arrogation to man of powers which should belong to Christ alone (cf. Bloom 1992: 102ff.). And we have seen that Mormonism does indeed maintain that the gap between man and God, flesh and spirit, is only one of degree, and not of kind. In that sense, Jim Siegel was quite right when he remarked that Mormons fail to maintain distinctions between things which other people – at least within the broad Judaeo-Christian tradition which includes anthropology – like to keep separate. However, the profound ontological implications of this teaching have not yet been stated in full. Mormonism thinks many of its doctrines genealogically. Where orthodox Christianity places kinship primarily in the realm of the earthly and natural, Mormons see eternal kinship as the distinguishing feature of divine status in heaven. Kinship is humanity's divine destiny.

Kinship is also the very nature of God. Not only do Mormons teach that we are all literally the children of Heavenly Father (and we also, although this is another story, therefore have a Heavenly Mother[29]); they also believe that God Himself is ultimately only one link in a chain of descent. God Himself had a father – although not a father of whom humans have any knowledge – and God's father must have had a father also, and so on, in an infinite regress. Eternity is defined not only by human genealogy, but also by divine genealogy, into which human descent is merely interposed as one link in a longer chain, indeed a network. Gods begat mortals who became Gods, and they in turn were the progenitors of other worlds, other mortals, and other Gods. For this reason the whole shape of the imagination of time is altered in Mormonism. The significance that would, in other kinds of Christianity, be occupied by creationism (accounts of the beginning of the world) and by eschatology (accounts of the end of the world, and of time) is, in Mormonism, relativized by its larger temporal-ontological context. Individuals are constantly subject to change, but it is always the same kind of change: one propelled by the human-divine procreation of generations.

Let me conclude by considering three sets of possible implications for anthropology. The first concerns 'genealogy'; the second 'modernity'; and the third 'religion'.

First, 'genealogy'. As we all know, genealogy was at one time considered the ideal universal, scientific methodology for the collection of comparative data on kinship (see Rivers, 1900). With the decline of lineage theory, and particularly after Schneider, genealogy became an anthropological embarassment. It has languished largely unconsidered since then, until very recently, when Bouquet, Bamford, and others began some interesting excavations of its history (Bamford & Leach in press). One conclusion which has been drawn from this recent work is that genealogy stands above all for the English folk preoccupation with the notion of pedigree – that is, with the idea of the lineal transmission of substance, such as blood or DNA, over time, and guaranteed by written records chronicling that 'bloodline' (Cassidy 2002).

While this is certainly true and important, I wonder whether these new descriptions have taken full account of the crucial significance of Christianity in the making of the whole concept and methodology of genealogy in Europe, and thereafter in America. Not only were all royal and aristocratic genealogies drawn up and devised by clergy, especially monastics, until at least the Reformation, but many of the earliest known models for genealogical modes of representation were in fact religious models.

One amongst these – and one which historians tell us was particularly formative – was the family tree drawn to represent the genealogy of Christ (Klapisch-Zuber 2000). This family tree, as recounted by Matthew and Luke, presents a notorious paradox insofar as it recounts Christ's lineage from King David but ends with Joseph, who, of course, was *not* the father of Jesus. This logical redundancy is, however, for our purposes perhaps its clearest message. In its mysterious play on the trope of descent, it highlights the way in which the entire Western tradition actually constructs both spiritual and physical transmission as, in the last analysis, supporting metaphors for each other. 'Blood' alone is only a partial language for continuity in this tradition. Even the transmission of kingship can be interrupted by divine will. Conversely the spiritual inheritance of Christ is communicated through analogies 'drawn' with the transmission of bodily substance.

The Christian background to genealogy seems to have been as widely forgotten in anthropology as has the Christian background to sociology. It is likely that a concentration on 'pedigree' and physical transmission alone is a considerable simplification of the meanings that people invest in such exercises.[30] In its insistence that our own kinship beliefs are all rooted in folk notions of the 'physical', this interpretation seems once more to replicate a rather aprioristic insistence on the opposition of body and spirit and thus itself to belong to the realm of the 'ascetic' Christianity of anthropology which we have been discussing. Mormon genealogy, and Mormon links between kinship and pre-mortal agency, offer one ethnographic example moving beyond the dual terms of this metaphor.

Second, 'modernity'. It is clear that the Mormon notion of genealogical time is at odds not merely with one profoundly influential current of Christianity but also with one profoundly influential social-scientific descendant of that current – secularization theory. To my mind the model of time implicit

in the concept of modernity is itself derived from the Christian theological idea of the transcendent. The notion of the irreversible change in the nature of things, consonant with a one-way epochal shift in time, underlying the logic of the allegedly 'impossible religion' is surely the shift from pre-modernity to modernity in another guise. Modernity – whenever it is to be dated or however it is to be understood – is a postulate of 'beyondness' in the social sciences as 'heaven' is a postulate of 'beyondness' in Christianity (Cannell in press *a*). Little wonder, then, that secularization theory feels uncomfortable with Mormon 'genealogical time' in which there is no absolute difference in kind between the mortal, post-mortal, and indeed pre-mortal phases of a person's existence. Transcendence in Mormonism has been relativized, and for this reason Mormonism must be declared either to be 'not really Christian at all' or, on the other hand, 'just another form of secularizing Protestantism'.

Third, 'religion'. This will bring me back to my starting point, Parry's brilliant essay on *The gift*. Mormonism arises out of two different tendencies in the broad Christian tradition. On the one hand, both Joseph Smith's family and the 'burned-over district' (Cross 1950) of 1830s upstate New York in which Mormonism arose were clearly steeped in the culture of ascetic, indeed Puritan, forms of American Protestantism. On the other hand, they were also steeped in the almost equally vital (and less well known) tradition of American reactions against Puritanism, including both hermetic approaches and intense theological speculation.[31] Mormonism certainly did not happen as though the link between ascetic Christianity and capitalist ideology had never taken place. It did, however, make something quite different out of that connection than what anthropological theory has often seen in it, and it did so in part by innovative synthesis and in part by using perpetually present aspects of existing Christian thinking that had historically been labelled as 'unorthodox'. Because Mormonism does not view the world as the inverse of the life to come and because it does not make an absolute division between mortal and divine, the relationship of the Latter Day Saints to the contemporary world can be (and is) 'modern' without necessarily being in any way secular. The most routine aspects of modern existence can be forms of religious work from which the numinous has not been evacuated. This does not work every time for every one, of course. Sometimes videos are 'cheesy'; sometimes genealogy feels like a waste of time. The potential for the driest task to reveal its eternal aspect is, however, always there, causing the man or woman at the computer to be filled with religious weeping. More even than the complex inversions of American secular logic practised by Susan Harding's Southern Baptists (Harding 2000), Mormon theology seems to present a deeply religious way to exist in American modernity. Some Mormon approaches and sensibilities, moreover, may be constitutive of an 'American religion' applicable to many more than the Church's 11 million recorded worldwide members.[32]

Parry's contention, you will recall, was that ascetic Christianity had an essential part to play in the construction of capitalism's dualistic ideologies, including the opposition of gift to business and of the spiritual to the worldly. I would like to suggest that Parry's thesis can be extended even further. Ascetic ideologies are by no means – as his essay itself shows – particular to religion but have also powerfully shaped the language and procedures of social science

itself. One result of extending Parry's argument in this way might be to allow anthropology to stop ruling out of court seemingly heterodox Christianities – Christianities which fail to supply such apparent essentials as a radical separation between body and spirit, between this life and the life to come, or between spirituality and kinship. We might instead come to see these not just as local 'resistance', or as peripheral parts of 'real Christianity', but as alternative Christianities deeply rooted in the highly unstable syntheses which Christian orthodoxies themselves represent. Anthropology is a discipline that is not always so 'secular' as it likes to think. Were it to become less ascetic in its understanding of religious experience, it might more often remember its own theological prehistory.

NOTES

[1] Chocolate in eternity is speculative, not doctrinal.

[2] Certainty, of course, like belief, being a concept that implies doubt (cf. Bloch 2002; Pouillon 1982; Ruel 1997).

[3] Anyone may apply for a ticket to a temple Open House, prior to its dedication.

[4] On Mormonism and the American sublime, see Stegner (1981 [1964]: esp. 142-7).

[5] There may be resonances here of nineteenth-century polygamous living arrangements, although these were not always in shared quarters. Cf. Bennion (1998: 119) on contemporary, sectarian polygamists.

[6] On Malinowski's approach to kinship, rather idiosyncratic for his day, and his critique of then-dominant genealogical paradigms, see, for instance, Bouquet (1993).

[7] Unorthodox Christianity in the Philippines is discussed in Cannell (1999); Cannell (2005) includes a critique of Pietz on idolatry; and Cannell (in press *a*) discusses in more detail the relationship between anthropology, modernity, and asceticism. More detailed publications on LDS genealogy and other topics are planned.

[8] The reference is to the title of a widely read article by Susan Harding (1991).

[9] I am indebted to Peter Gow for reminding me of Terry Turner's Mennonite background.

[10] With the exception of the records of direct revelations to the Prophet in Doctrine and Covenants.

[11] I have written elsewhere on the issues of untranslatablity in Christian practice in the Philippines, in particular on those raised by Vicente Rafael (see Cannell in press *b*).

[12] Although many ethnographers have noted the ways in which local Christian practices do not bear out the ascetic ideal, most imply, as Pina Cabral does, that attention to the material is compensatory for the intolerable stress on the unearthly in Christian doctrine. They thus do not actually challenge the notion of Christianity as centrally ascetic (although see, e.g., Coleman 2000 for fascinating material on the intensely contradictory status of materiality in contemporary Swedish charismatic Protestantism).

[13] For Sahlins, this kind of Christianity is ultimately Augustinian – although we might take issue with this, since it seems that even Augustine viewed the body not only as a site of sin-

fulness, but also as a space through which the truth of the divine nature could be known. It may be more correct to think of this form of pessimistic Christianity, along with De Lubac (1969), as a post-Reformation reading of Augustine. Sahlins also over-simplifies Peter Brown's work on Patristic asceticism (see note 15).

[14] Parry later himself noted (in response to Bynum 1987) the tension between monism and dualism within Christianity in two further brilliant pieces (Parry 1989; 1995). However, a lacuna remains between this addendum and his Malinowski lecture argument on the ascetic nature of capitalism.

[15] On the Incarnationist tenderness towards the body inherent in the thinking of even the most ferocious of the Desert Fathers, see Brown (1988: esp. 387-447). On female mystics who imagined Christ as Mother, see Bynum (1987). On the complex history of medieval teachings on bodily resurrection, see Bynum (1995).

[16] On the increasing popularity in the nineteenth century, including in early Protestantism, of hopes of seeing family in heaven, see McDannell & Lang (1990: 228-75); on earlier debates over the possibility that aspects of human society would be present in eternity, see Bynum (1995); on anticipations of the idea of materiality and progress in heaven in Swedenborg and others, see Cross (1950: 341-7), McDannell (1995: 103-27), McDannell & Lang (1990: 181-227).

[17] The role played by Church strictures against adolescent masturbation and homosexuality in producing depression and even suicides among young LDS men and women is an extremely painful topic often raised by the Church's critics, including those who are faithful Church members.

[18] At the time of Joseph Smith, unmarried Saints were said to become attendants on celestial couples in the afterlife. This view is no longer popular, but exactly how singleness will be sorted out is a grey area.

[19] The earthly body is the instrument through which we meet trials and acquire knowledge, which is our task on earth as agreed to pre-mortally by all living beings. This teaching forms part of the Mormon doctrines on the Plan of Salvation. There is no space here to set that teaching out in full, but one might note that pre-mortal beings have only a 'spirit body' – as opposed to the similar sounding but actually much more advanced 'spiritual body' of exulted beings in the Celestial Kingdom. The only way to get from spirit body to spiritual body is via life on earth.

[20] The enormous scholarship on LDS doctrine and history cannot be even briefly reviewed within this compass. However, few anthropologists have worked on Mormonism, notable exceptions being Bennion (1998) on sectarians and Mitchell (2000) and Davies (2000) on the established Church; this last provides both important arguments pertaining to the Mormon culture of salvation and a valuable point of access to the wider literature.

[21] The example given has a particular esoteric significance insofar as it stresses the closeness of man and God both by its reference to what is known as the 'Adam-God hypothesis' (see Hall 1986) and because it closes with the prophet Enoch, who was taken up into heaven while still living (see Bloom 1992: 100). Nevertheless, each genealogy would have its own resonances while sharing in the general implications discussed here.

[22] The Church's position has varied over time on exactly how many generations of genealogical work are necessary or desirable for average members to carry out, as it has in the relative weight it places on vicarious baptism for the related dead, and for strangers (Allen, Embry & Mehr, 1995).

[23] In 324 AD Constantine became the first Christian ruler of the Roman Empire, transforming the status of Christianity from a persecuted minority faith into a state religion. Regarded in mainstream Church history as the origin of the Catholic, that is, 'Universal', Church, this event of course predated the development of the power of the papacy and the break with the Orthodox Christians by which later (and contemporary) Roman Catholicism came to be defined. The LDS members I knew frequently linked Constantine with contemporary Roman Catholicism.

[24] Of whom ancient settlers of North America, the Nephites and Lammanites of the book of Mormon, are said to be the descendants.

[25] Joseph Smith identified marriage sealings, rather than baptisms, with the transformation of Mormons into members of the tribe of Israel; I do not at present know when the change of emphasis came about.

[26] Emphasis on this has varied historically. One can see the origin of this teaching in very early Mormonism, but it appears to have been downplayed in late nineteenth- to mid-twentieth-century Mormonism in favour of a focus on the heritage of individual (most typically, Utah-based) Mormon families.

[27] 'Divine accounting' refers to the teaching that Christ's sacrifice is credited to sinners to allow them to be admitted to eternal life. Perhaps more precisely the resonance would be with the idea of 'recording angels'. These two notions come together in images of the judgement of souls whose fate is written in the Book of Life (e.g. Revelation 3: 5). In popular and arcane Christian traditions, the Book of Life is replicated in the scrolls of four attendant archangels; in connected traditions, the good and bad deeds of each mortal life may be described as being written down by a recording angel. The sources for such motifs are various, but are often derived indirectly from the early sixth-century writings of Dionysius the Areopagite ('Pseudo-Dionysus') especially *The celestial hierarchies* (2003 [*c*.500 AD]), filtered through a wide range of neo-Platonic and apocryphal additions. There are many contemporary websites and other sources devoted to variations on these themes (see, for instance, *www.sarahsarchangels.com*).

[28] Largely polygynous, not polyandrous. Mormon polygamy was banned by the Church in 1893, and is now only practised by fundamentalist sects, excommunicate from the main Church.

[29] A key issue for Mormon feminist scholarship (see Hanks 1992).

[30] See Edwards (in press) for ethnographic support from contemporary England.

[31] See Brooke (1996) and Cross (1950) on the religious environment and inheritance of early Mormonism.

[32] See Bloom (1992) and McDannell (1995). Perhaps what sociological polls such as the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2001) interpret as the 'decline' of traditional religion in America (and as incipient secularism) may actually be better understood as signs of religion of another sensibility which has more in common with Mormonism.

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L'esprit du christianisme en anthropologie

Résumé

L'auteur critique la manière dont l'anthropologie a envisagé le christianisme, en affirmant qu'un modèle trop étroit et ascétique de christianisme s'est imposé comme la norme et en remettant en question l'affirmation selon laquelle les sciences sociales « séculières » se sont totalement affranchies de leurs présupposés théologiques chrétiens. L'article établit un dialogue avec d'autres auteurs ayant traité des sujets apparentés, notamment avec Jonathan Parry à propos de l'*Essai sur le don* de Mauss, ainsi que Talal Asad, John Millbank et Marshall Sahlins. L'auteur revisite cependant ici les hypothèses anthropologiques établies sur des sujets tels que la transcendance, la modernité, l'ascétisme et la généalogie, sur la base d'un travail de terrain réalisé chez les Mormons américains, dont la religion postule des relations entre les mortels et le Divin uniques dans le monde chrétien. Bien qu'ils croient fermement au Christ, les Mormons sont souvent considérés comme « pas vraiment chrétiens » par les principales Églises. L'auteur affirme ici que ces prises de position théologiques se retrouvent dans les sciences sociales et qu'elles révèlent une partie des orthodoxies inavouées de celles-ci (qui sont aussi les nôtres).

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