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Editor's Introduction

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Forum: Lived Mormonism

Editors' Introduction

MORMONISM PROVIDES A COMPELLING PARADOX for scholars: it is both powerfully institutional and richly local and participatory. Although contemporary Mormon studies by most accounts remains dominated by attention to aspects of the institutional (biographies of religious elites, intellectual history, and church history), there is also a long-standing if minority tradition of interest in the religion as it is experienced and lived *in situ*. As Robert Orsi has observed, lived religion, while not ignoring the institutional and historical, regards its subject more particularly “as a form of cultural work,” directing attention “to institutions *and* persons, texts *and* rituals, practice *and* theology, things *and* ideas—all as media of making and unmaking worlds.”¹ The study of lived religion is aggressively interdisciplinary, drawing on social history, sociology, ethnography, folklore, material culture, and other methodological tools. The scholars in this volume’s forum assess “lived Mormonism,” both in terms of how disparate angles of inquiry might abet understanding of Mormonism and how Mormonism might enliven scholarly discussion of world Christianity, globalization, and secularization.

1. Robert A. Orsi, *The Madonna of 115th Street: Faith and Community in Italian Harlem, 1880–1950*, 2nd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2002), xix.

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