Anti-Mormonism and the Newfangled Countercult Culture

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Reviewed by Louis Midgley

Anti-Mormonism and the Newfangled Countercult Culture

The current manifestations of sectarian anti-Mormonism are in large measure part of a malady long present on American soil. The modern sectarian countercult movement, whose dimensions and disposition I will examine in this essay, is but one more episode in a series of manifestations of religious bigotry. Hostility to those with different interpretations of the Bible or with different understandings of divinity has a long and undistinguished history in America—it has never entirely abated.

Of course, the Saints remember that anti-Mormon sentiments, often followed by violent deeds, began with the initial efforts of Joseph Smith to relate his encounters with angelic messengers, and such opposition has subsequently accompanied the efforts of the Saints to build the Kingdom of God. The restoration of the gospel of Jesus Christ was thus set in a matrix of sectarian hostility to the very idea that God could make available through a prophet the fulness of the gospel with the recovery of the Book of Mormon. News of the restoration led to the persecution and eventually the lynching of Joseph Smith by a mob acting without legal sanction.

Thanks must go to Keith Edward Tolbert, who generously provided textual materials, supplied clarifications, and responded to my questions. I also wish to thank Reverend Dennis A. Wright, director of Utah Missions, Inc. (Marlow, Oklahoma), for his valuable comments and suggestions. Gary Novak and Ted Vaggalis also provided helpful criticisms of early drafts. In addition, I have again benefited from the care with which the FARMS editors prepared this essay for publication.
The expulsion of the faithful Saints from Illinois then followed. The story of the removal of the earliest members of the fledgling Church of Christ from New York to Ohio, the subsequent movement of the Saints to Missouri, followed by their exodus to Illinois and eventually to Utah, is one involving unrelenting sectarian bias and bigotry.

The story of sectarian anti-Mormonism in the 1830s and 1840s—during the lifetime of Joseph Smith—is a rather well-known element in the larger picture of American religious bigotry, and one at least somewhat familiar to historians who specialize in one slice of the American past. Unfortunately these matters are somewhat less well-known to Americans generally, as are the stories of anti-Catholic, anti-Quaker, anti-Jewish, anti-Masonic, and other manifestations of religious bigotry.

Anti-Mormon sentiments unfortunately did not disappear when tens of thousands of the faithful, at enormous and heroic personal cost, sought refuge in Utah from gentile persecution. Subsequently, episodes of sectarian hostility have been directed against both the teachings and leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ. Even now only the most insular of Saints has not on occasion been confronted with lurid, inaccurate, and hostile newspaper reports, unseemly tabloids, explicitly anti-Mormon leaflets, tracts, pamphlets, books, and the growing arsenal of tape recordings and videos attacking the church. The Saints can be forgiven for suspecting that something out there really does not like them and their beliefs.

Unfortunately, even when we consider what has been written about American manifestations of religious bigotry, no modestly satisfactory account is available of the entire range of individuals and agencies dedicated to attacking the beliefs and practices—the very existence—of those seen as somehow differing from the point of view of those who assign to themselves the role of gatekeepers of religious orthodoxy in America. And with all the vast increase in competent historical treatments of the Mormon past, nothing approaching a full history of anti-Mormonism has been published.1 It is difficult to account for the absence of such a

1 A remarkable new book by Terryl L. Givens entitled The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) comes the closest. We also have William Nelson's
history, since Latter-day Saint identity is at least in part formed in the crucible of opposition from anti-Mormons.

An Imperative Duty

With The 1996 Directory of Cult Research Organizations (hereafter DCRO)\(^2\) in hand, we can begin to discover something about the magnitude of contemporary sectarian anti-Mormonism and how it fits into a larger pattern of religious bigotry. DCRO lists most of the agencies and individuals currently constituting the anticult movement in America. Those unfamiliar with this movement may be astonished by its size and variety.\(^3\) Since the late 1960s and early 1970s, the essentially evangelical component of the larger anticult movement has grown dramatically. And it has subsequently spread from the United States to many parts of the world. DCRO sketches the broad outlines of this countercult movement. And it identifies most of the individuals and agencies currently engaged in producing or distributing anti-Mormon propaganda. In addition, those who have encountered some manifestation of anti-Mormonism—my hunch is that this must include at least most adult English-speaking Latter-day Saints—may be surprised by the number of parachurches (aka ministries or outreaches) that target the Church of Jesus Christ.

DCRO provides, for the most part, a listing of individuals and agencies currently involved in monitoring—read attacking—the sincere faith of other people. But the by-now-perhaps-petulant readers must be asking why they should be concerned with these matters. For one thing, has not sectarian hostility to the Church of Jesus Christ abated somewhat over the years? Is not anti-

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\(^1\) Anti-Mormon Literature,” in Encyclopedia of Mormonism, 1:45–52, which provides a brief introduction. And several essays by Massimo Introvigne, which I cite elsewhere in this essay, are worth careful attention, as are the responses to anti-Mormonism published in this Review. In addition, Davis Bitton has written a thoughtful introduction entitled “Antimormonism: Periodization, Strategies, Motivations,” dated May 1985, and privately circulated.

\(^2\) DCRO is to be pronounced “DEE-crow,” according to the introduction to the directory provided by Tolbert (p. vi).

\(^3\) For example, among various anticult agencies, DCRO identifies thirty-five anti-Islam agencies (see pp. 49–50 for the list of “Christian Study Centers on Islam”).
Mormonism essentially a thing of the past? Why stir up what amounts to a hornets’ nest by even mentioning anti-Mormons? And why dwell on the unpleasant aspects of the Mormon past? Or, is not anti-Mormonism, to the extent that it still exists, simply the pastime of a few cranks? Part of the answer to this question is an emphatic yes. Cranks, yes. But cranks who may have an influence both with those who are searching and unsettled and with the naive and uninformed. And, unfortunately, most of those who encounter the restored gospel for the first time are uninformed on these matters, which might well be said of the majority of our missionaries and many members of the church.

Latter-day Saints want to believe (or hope) that the answer to these and other related questions is such that they need not concern themselves with anti-Mormonism. For a variety of reasons, some of which are understandable and even laudable, they hope we can safely ignore anti-Mormonism. They want to believe that anti-Mormonism is the work of a few dissidents or other rather obviously eccentric people. Certainly most of the earlier overt persecution fortunately seems to have disappeared. Oh, there are people who raise a fuss when a new temple is announced. But we survive anyway. So can we not now safely ignore a few apostates and sectarian anti-Mormon preachers and their dreadful, repetitious, badly written, poorly reasoned literature? Well, yes and no.

Much of the countercult movement, as I will demonstrate, manifests quirks and foibles. For this reason Keith Tolbert, de facto author of DCRO, refuses to include some individuals and agencies in his directory, since they are obviously profoundly nonrational or immature. Tolbert feels he is justified in suppressing even their names. Hence, one will not find Texe Marrs listed in DCRO; however, his very strange conspiracy theories are peddled

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4 I am referring here to eccentric persons who have latched onto some theory that they pursue at all costs.

5 Flashpoint: A Newsletter Ministry of Texe Marrs, in September 1996, contained a “flash alert” entitled “The Beast 666 Universal Human Control System” that is about to be introduced around the world and “implemented by federal and international intelligence and police agencies.” This is all part of “the illuminati’s fascist agenda for the New World Order.” And it is time for “Christian Bible believers, American patriots, and flag-waving nationalists” to stand up and be counted. Christians are urged to purchase a book by Marrs entitled The Beast 666 Universal Control System: Project L.U.C.I.D. This book describes
by many of the agencies that Tolbert lists in his directory. The name and address of Texe Marrs should appear in DCRO no matter how odd or perverse his stuff happens to be. DCRO is, or should be, a scholarly tool, and hence all countercult agencies should be listed.

But in response to those Saints who insist that anti-Mormonism should be ignored, it should be remembered that the Saints have been admonished that it is their “imperative duty” (D&C 123:7, 9, 11), one they owe not only to themselves but “to all the rising generation, and to all the pure in heart,” both to collect and respond to the defamation aimed at the kingdom of God (D&C 123:1–17).

For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it—Therefore, that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them. (D&C 123:12)

And the Saints are also admonished not to count them “as small things; for there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things” (D&C 123:15).

how a “new global state, made up of the FBI, KGB, CIA, NSA, IRS, EPA, MCIC, USDA, FDA, NRO, BATF, FINCEN, INS, DOJ, WTO, Europol, Interpol, Mossad, and the MAB” will soon be running the world. Order now! Marrs also has tapes exposing “The Awful Truth about Billy Graham,” and the “Satanic Secrets of the Olympic Games in Atlanta,” the “Circle of Intrigue,” which involves the CFR, Trilateral Commission, Bilderbergers, Priory of Sion, Order of Skull & Bones, and Grand Lodges of Freemasonry, and which controls Bill Clinton, Newt Gingrich, Bob Dole, Colin Powell, and Ross Perot. In addition, the “CIA and the Russian KGB and British Intelligence also work for the Inner Circle and enforce its directives.” But the most interesting tape concerns “The Wicked Men of the Bohemian Grove.” Well, need I go further? This fellow is either cynical or sick or both. But he has a thriving ministry; at last count, he preaches on fifteen radio stations. Marrs’s credentials: he had “a 20-year plus career as a regular U.S. Air Force Officer” and has subsequently had books published by “such major New York publishers as Stein & Day, Simon Schuster, Prentice-Hall, McGraw-Hill/Tab Books, Dow Jones-Irwin, Barron’s, and Facts on File.” So he has to be taken seriously. Right?
The Many Uses of DCRO

A large and sometimes rather bizarre literature is marketed by anti-Mormon parachurches and distributed by sectarian bookstores. Even some of the more zealous anti-Mormons are sometimes willing to admit that this literature is simply dreadful stuff and hence easily answered by Latter-day Saint scholars. For example, according to James White, one of the more gifted among the current crop of anti-Mormons, “modern LDS apologists and scholars . . . have little difficulty demonstrating inconsistencies and half-truths” in anti-Mormon literature. But demolishing the arguments found in this literature does not make it go away. Why? Though White may have had other intentions, he still provides at least part of the answer:

For many, Mormons are simply polygamous cultists, out to destroy the souls of anyone unwary enough to be caught in their clutches. Yet many who would provide the strongest denunciations of LDS theology and practice are the very ones who have done the least work in seriously studying LDS writings and interacting with LDS viewpoints. Consequently, a large body of literature exists that is based not so much upon fair, even-handed study of primary source documentation as upon a very large dose of emotion and bias. Such literature normally emphasizes the sensational, seeking to arouse the emotions of the reader against the LDS faith.

White acknowledges that many critics still maintain that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a “devil-inspired cult . . . and that’s all there is to it.” For such people the ques-

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6 See James R. White, Is the Mormon My Brother? Discerning the Differences between Mormonism and Christianity (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1997), 17.
7 Ibid. White implies that, unlike previous anti-Mormon literature, his effort to demonstrate that the Church of Jesus Christ is actually a pagan cult will be fair and even-handed, not emotive, biased, and so forth.
8 Ibid. White wrongly claims that Latter-day Saints “like to focus on such literature, often treating it as if it is the ‘norm.’” The responses to anti-
tion of "interacting with LDS viewpoints" simply does not arise. And he adds that "for those who find in Mormonism the very embodiment of evil itself, there is little reason to ask the question, 'Is Mormonism Christian?' And there is even less reason to spend any time at all fairly evaluating the arguments of LDS scholars on the topic." 

From the LDS perspective, sectarian anti-Mormon literature at its very best manifests thin and inadequate arguments and little if any genuine understanding of the position it seeks to demolish. However, this dreadful literature, in addition to being tedious and annoying, has one advantage—it is entertaining.

I strongly recommend DCRO to all those who have an interest in contemporary anti-Mormonism. Its uses are many. For example, with DCRO in hand, librarians or archivists should be in a better position to assemble the outpouring of gray, ephemeral, or fugitive anti-Mormon literature. DCRO should also prove useful to those interested in the larger anticult movement, and especially that portion of this movement that has its roots in one narrow strand of American religiosity. My fondness for DCRO, I must

Mormon literature found in this Review show that White is wrong in claiming that attention is given only to the most bizarre literature.

9 Ibid. Ironically, even after granting the weaknesses in anti-Mormon literature, White proceeds to answer in the negative the question of whether the Mormon is his brother. He does this without even attempting to address the actual objections that LDS scholars have made to the question-begging that takes place when anti-Mormons contrast "Mormonism and Christianity." So much for White's boast of "seriously studying LOS writing and interacting with LDS viewpoints."

10 Such literature may remain unknown even to those who are interested in or charged with assembling it as part of the historical record. Of course, the better known anti-Mormon books, as well as some other materials, are found in libraries and archives easily accessible to Latter-day Saint scholars, but many tabloids, newsletters, leaflets, tracts, and booklets, as well as numerous tapes and videos, seem not to have been preserved. I can hardly bring myself to contemplate the preservation problem presented by the opining currently taking place on the World Wide Web.

11 It is troubling to discover that little effort has been made at BYU to secure copies of the fugitive literature produced since World War II by the counter-cult movement. If newsletters, tracts, tabloids, pamphlets, and booklets are not acquired soon after publication, it becomes difficult to assemble them later. The HBLL has, of course, acquired some of the literature produced by the more visible anti-Mormon ministries.
admit, rests in part on a mild curiosity about the vocation and indoctrination of those who produce and distribute anti-Mormon literature.

DCRO lists and also services self-appointed preachers, operating what amount to a host of tiny parachurches on the margins of the Protestant evangelical world. Mostly these entrepreneurs operate without any ecclesiastical or academic credentials or profess credentials that are essentially phony. They perform on the assumption that they speak infallibly for what they like to call historic, biblical Christianity. DCRO may have an appeal to countercult entrepreneurs eager to network with each other or concerned about their competition.

But the usefulness of DCRO goes beyond identifying anti-Mormon individuals and agencies, providing hints concerning their ideologies and assertions, or even making it easier for archivists and others to gather anti-Mormon literature. DCRO should also assist those interested in the toadstooling of countercult parachurches that has taken place since the late 1960s. This growth seems to have produced, or at least services, a kind of countercult culture. And DCRO should make it easier for students of this countercult culture to track and better understand these developments. Those with an academic interest in the parachurches spawned on the fringes of the new evangelicalism, or of media-savvy evangelists and their audiences, may find DCRO useful, since it discloses interesting and curious features of what has, since the late 1960s, become an expanding component of the anarchy of American Protestantism.

It is difficult to find a copy of DCRO. The library at Brigham Young University does not own copies of any edition of DCRO. Similar to most anti-Mormon literature, DCRO is a fugitive publication. Even the latest edition does not carry an ISBN number. Librarians cannot find it by routinely consulting "Books in Print." It is like much of the anticult literature: sometimes distributed in rather large quantities, but not likely to attract the attention of librarians or archivists. This is true even at BYU, where one might expect a concerted effort to assemble anti-Mormon literature, especially since Doctrine and Covenants 123 makes it an

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12 FARMS has copies of three editions of DCRO in its library.
"imperative duty that we owe to God" (D&C 123:7; compare 123:9, 11) for the Saints "to gather up the libelous publications that are afloat" (D&C 123:4), and also insists "that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness" found in these publications (D&C 123:13), "for there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things" (D&C 123:15).

Those who are, as I am, either annoyed or amused (or both) by what goes on in the anticult movement, including especially the essentially evangelical countercult component, might find DCRO useful. And the individuals who make up the countercult movement have their entertainment value. I must insist that the fun-factor in observing the mischief and quarreling that goes on within the larger anticult movement (and especially within the countercult segment) should not be underestimated.

How Large the Load?

Eric Pement, "who is [a] former member of the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints,\textsuperscript{13} and is now a born-again Christian," as well as "a full-time member of Jesus People USA Covenant Church" (see the blurb "about the authors," p. 77), published the first version of DCRO in 1986 and updated it in 1988. I have not seen either of these versions. Keith Tolbert, who is associated with a segment of the Pentecostal movement, joined Pement to produce editions in 1991 and 1993.\textsuperscript{14} With the 1996 edition Tolbert became the de facto editor. His recent work indicates an increasing sophistication. A nice feature of DCRO is that each of the editions I have examined provides at least some

\textsuperscript{13} Tom Adcock of the Jesus People Information Center in Sacramento, California, regularly refers to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints when he attacks Latter-day Saints. See, for example, his Jesus People Newsletter 26/1 (no date [1997?): 19. This kind of mistake is made by those whose understanding of Mormon things is minimal or derived from other anti-Mormons.

indication of whether an individual or agency specifically wants to be known as targeting Latter-day Saints and whether they are in the business of producing anti-Mormon literature.\footnote{15}

The 752 entries in the current edition of DCRO—up from the 729 in 1993 and 652 in 1991—provide the following kinds of useful and sometimes amusing information: (1) names (and often the acronym) of each agency, (2) name (or names) and position (or positions) of those who operate each countercult agency (or in some instances in the sociological section, an actual research agency rather than a vehicle for producing or spreading propaganda), (3) mailing addresses and telephone numbers, (4) some indication of the activities and literature produced or offered, since most countercult agencies produce virtually nothing on their own, and (5) sometimes an indication of the previous membership in the supposed cults they are busy attacking.

What is clear from DCRO is that some—even many—of the individuals involved in the countercult movement have, if they are to be believed, truly extraordinary careers in which they have hopped from one cult to another before eventually finding a calling in the countercult industry. In fact, having been born a cultist or lured into a cult or cults turns out to be one of the credentials that those engaged in the countercult industry like to advertise. When they finally accepted Jesus as their personal savior, they became inside dopesters able to expose the evils of their previous spiritual home or homes. Latter-day Saints know them as apostates.

It is therefore both instructive and amusing to discover that ex-witch, ex-Satanist, ex-Mason, ex-Spiritist (Spiritualist?), ex-Roman Catholic, and ex-LDS Bill Schnoebelen, along with his wife Sharon, now constitutes a remarkable little countercult called With One Accord (WOA). Armed with intimate, insider information on all these presumably dangerous cults, the Schnoebelens

\footnote{15 In addition to the \textit{ARC Cult Literature Index}, 1987, Module 4 (Trenton, Mich.: Apologetic Research Coalition, 1988), Tolbert has also provided me with a copy of the \textit{ARC Cult Resources Guide (1990–91)} (Trenton, Mich.: American Religions Center, 1991), which lists over 2,000 tracts, pamphlets, books, newsletters, magazines, journals, cassette tapes, video tapes, research papers, computer programs and databases produced by Christian cult-monitoring agencies. Tolbert is attempting to make these sorts of materials available on CD.}
should be trusted. Right? Well, they can at least be trusted to provide lurid tales of the evils they once found so overwhelmingly attractive. Bill Schnoebeelen is perhaps best known to Latter-day Saints as a close associate of J. Edward Decker, of *The God Makers* infamy. But Schnoebeelen has, if anything, outdone Decker in advancing weird, unseemly nonsense by arguing that LDS buildings, especially temples, are perfectly designed to “draw demons like flypaper” and “that the Salt Lake Temple is, in fact, a perfectly designed habitation for devils.” Ed Decker, not to be outdone, then claimed that the spires on the temple “represent an upside down nail, pointing defiantly toward heaven—as if to impale the Lord Jesus anew when He comes in the clouds of glory!”

Tolbert feels at least some responsibility to those who consult his directory who might turn to the individuals and agencies listed therein for information and advice. Hence, he has been unwilling, as I have indicated, to include some individuals because they do not manifest the necessary stability, maturity, or honesty. Still, some obviously bizarre people make it into DCRO, making it both useful and amusing. Almost anyone can get listed. One of my favorite entries in DCRO is the International HQ for Victims of the Mormon Cult, operated by Ms. Joyce McKinney out of Newland, North Carolina. Some readers may recall Ms. McKinney, who once enjoyed a short and inglorious moment in the sun after having been arrested for having thugs kidnap an LDS missionary in England so that she could gratify her erotic desires. But even though the bizarre Schnoebeelen and Ms. McKinney are listed in DCRO, its editor has at least some standards. As I have indicated, he refuses to list Texe Marrs.

How extensive is anti-Mormon literature? Tolbert has shown that in 1987 thirty-six different periodicals (that is, newsletters, magazines, journals, tabloids, and so forth) were published by

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countercult ministries. Fifteen of these were focused primarily on Latter-day Saints. He also found that for one year—1987—Mormonism, with 333 articles, is by far the most analyzed religion in this literature, more than tripling Jehovah’s Witness studies (90 articles). Jehovah’s Witness and New Age/Occult studies (57) form a second tier of literature after which there is another significant drop to “cults.” Following cults, in general, (25) and the RLDS (16) the decline is slow but steady.17

Tolbert figures that 54.59 percent of the countercult periodical literature published in 1987 was directed at the Church of Jesus Christ.18 And since 1988 the number of periodical publications and also individual articles dealing with Mormon things has steadily increased. So there is a very extensive and growing sectarian anti-Mormon periodical literature.

Tolbert’s calculations only included periodical literature, not anti-Mormon books, booklets, and pamphlets, or occasional leaflets, flyers, and tracts. When these are added in, the total number, which I cannot specify exactly, is much higher. Another indication of the continued growth of sectarian anti-Mormonism is the steady increase in the number of countercult ministries that produce or distribute periodical and other anti-Mormon literature. The various editions of DCRO provide some striking evidence of this toadstooling. In 1988 the evangelical section of DCRO listed 305 agencies and individuals; by 1991 that number had risen to 510, in 1993 to 556, and in 1996 to 561. The number of individuals and agencies that were listed as specifically targeting the Church of Jesus Christ also seems to have risen proportionately since 1988, when DCRO first appeared.

DCRO also provides an excellent vehicle for locating those who produce and distribute anti-Mormon literature. Tolbert is not, however, able to identify every individual or agency engaged in those activities.19 I do not fault him in the least for not being able

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17 See Tolbert, _ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987_, 21; compare 22, and see also the first three appendices. I have retained Tolbert’s punctuation.
18 Ibid., 22.
19 Among those he missed are Steven J. Dealy, _Mission to Mormons_ (Colorado Springs, Colorado); Matt Paulson, _Preach the Word Ministry_ (Salem,
to locate and track all these ministries. He has done about as well as one could expect. His difficulties in fashioning a truly comprehensive directory of countercultism tell us something important about those who engage in the countercult (and anti-Mormon) industry.

Countercult “ministries” often shift locations, change names, go inactive, or simply disappear without a trace;°° or they may not care to be known for what they are. In addition, they are generally not responsible to an ecclesiastical superior, since most denominations, with a few notable exceptions, do not officially sponsor or encourage wanton attacks on the faith of others.21

Oregon); Jack Kettler, so-called “book ministry” (Denver, Colorado); Mark Chavez, United Ministries (Conyers, Georgia); Jim Zilonka, Cultivate Ministries (Colorado Springs, Colorado); Gerald Urban (Fort Myers, Florida); John A. Wilson (Chesterfield, Missouri); Marsha Norton (Las Vegas, Nevada); Loftes Tryk, who occasionally distributes something called Jacobs Well Bulletin (Pine Mountain, California); Professor Alan W. Gomes, editor of the Zondervan Guide to Cults and Religious Movements, two series of booklets. Gomes has published a general introduction to this larger collection of pamphlets entitled Unmasking the Cults (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995). Gomes teaches at Talbot School of Theology, Biola University. It is unfortunate that Gomes is not listed in DCRO, since he is a participant in and benefactor of the countercult industry.

Appendix 4 of DCRO offers the names of “inactive, disbanded, and renamed countercult ministries.” This list includes 320 agencies that are defunct or have gone inactive, as well as an additional 47 that moved without leaving a forwarding address, and 77 more for which Tolbert has neither a current address nor telephone number and which hence require additional research (pp. 51–54). The remaining 214 agencies listed in Appendix 4 of DCRO have either changed names or have merged with other agencies under a different name.

The Southern Baptist Convention is a notable exception. Augmenting its previous anti-Mormon stance, the SBC has recently embarked on a slick public relations campaign against Latter-day Saints. This includes a video entitled “The Mormon Puzzle,” which is supplemented by numerous anti-Mormon leaflets, tracts, and brochures. Though it has not been common for Protestant denominations to officially appear anti-Mormon, it has been very common for gentlemen of the cloth to do so. Hence the SBC version of “The Mormon Puzzle,” put out in 1997, can be profitably compared with an earlier work by the same title by the Reverend Robert W. Beers, The Mormon Puzzle; And How to Solve It (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1887). See also his “Sources of Danger from Mormonism,” Bibliotheca Sacra 58/4 (1901): 469–90. With just a few cosmetic changes, this article would blend in well with current anti-Mormon literature. There is much reinventing the wheel in sectarian anti-Mormon literature, and much lifting of old stuff that is made to appear new.
There is no quality control over countercult agencies or their product since they appear on the scene entirely by whim.

Some evangelicals seem aware of the need to limit the excesses of the “cult” bashers. In 1991 Tim Stafford, senior writer for the conservative evangelical magazine *Christianity Today*, while describing what he called “The Kingdom of the Cult Watchers,” asked “who watches the cult watchers?” He had to admit that those at the very center of the current “cult” bashing business “were little known and had limited accountability.” Stafford noted that a few countercult ministries, like the Christian Research Institute (CRI), have a board of directors. Does this really help police the quality of what is produced? No! A board of directors is often mere window dressing. According to Stafford, “even assuming that such boards are careful and independent—a large assumption for many countercult groups—how can they help prevent unfounded allegations or sloppy thinking?”

Can an umbrella group like Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR) “police countercult ministries”? Stafford is pessimistic about such endeavors. Who would watch the watchers? And since the countercultists are driven by an urge to identify and combat what they consider Christian “heresies,” it turns out that “the Christian cult organizations now critique groups that they themselves would regard as Christian.” Hence, often as much or even more quarreling goes on between countercult “ministries” as bashing of so-called “cults.” And, according to Stafford, “the problem of sloppy research and exaggerated claims remains.”

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23 Ibid. Sandra Tanner, a Salt Lake City housewife, who is identified as “President of the Board—Utah Lighthouse Ministry,” provides one of the endorsements for James R. White’s *Is the Mormon My Brother?* [1]. The Utah Lighthouse Ministry is a Mom and Pop operation consisting of Sandra, who handles public relations, and Jerald, her husband, who produces tabloids and “books.”
24 Ibid., 22.
25 Ibid., 19, 22. Stafford also reported that Ronald Enroth, a sociologist at Westmont College in Santa Barbara, California, who is intensely involved in the sectarian countercult industry, told him that he was distressed because “there is no serious attention being paid to” the dangers posed by the cult movement “at our seminaries” where “we have many checks and balances. . . . In cult-watch-
Hence “the decline of denominational structures makes” theological novelties, even or especially those flowering on the margins of the new Evangelicalism, yet “harder to screen or stop.”

Stafford opines that, from the perspective of countercult ministries, “it is clearly not enough to believe in the supernatural or to feel born again. Precision in belief is essential.” Though some highly emotional personal experience is emphasized by most evangelicals, who typically talk about being “born again” as accepting Jesus as their personal savior, the crucial thing turns out to be a dogmatic theology that, among other things, emphasizes the need for such an experience even at the expense of much of what can be found in the Bible. So a sizable number of evangelicals, according to Stafford, have become heresy-hunters who center their attention on those they consider Christian, as well as on Latter-day Saints and others, who they deny are in any sense Christian. Stafford believes that “this can lead to sensationalism: talk show-incited, newsletter-spread undocumented assertions” that end up tarring, for example, even such well-known evangelical preachers as James Dobson. Evangelicals blasting away at the supposed false teachings of fellow evangelicals can be seen in the catalogs of ministries that operate mail-order bookstores.

Ruckman offers at least a hundred “books” he has authored and a vast number of lessons, tapes, and videos often consisting of his own assaults on those he considers Christian heretics, a rather rich collection of sectarian counterculture literature, including anti-Catholic literature and, of course, some anti-Mormon stuff. Ruckman is certain that the KJV is the one and only infallible Word of God. All other translations are Alexandrian and hence Roman Catholic corruptions of the only infallible Bible. He loves conspiracy theories. Hence he can prove that UFOs are real, and he can identify, from the Bible of course, where they come from. The nonsense offered for sale by Ruckman simply staggers the imagination. Other than the vicious anti-Catholic literature, most of what Ruckman offers constitutes attacks on fellow evangelicals. Unfortunately, Ruckman’s Bible Baptist Ministry does not appear in DCRO, even though it distributes counterculture literature.
But Stafford also points out that "heresy can mean 'whatever you disagree with.' Let the gullible beware."\textsuperscript{31} How true. In a side-bar entitled "What Is Heresy?" accompanying Stafford's essay, the editors of Christianity Today pointed out that the Greek word hairesis, from which we get our word heresy, originally identified "a school of thought, particularly of some specific philosopher." Hence we typically refer to Stoic, Academic (Neoplatonic), Epicurean hairesis and other "schools" of philosophy. And Josephus used the term hairesis to identify sects or factions within Judaism such as the Essenes, Sadducees, and Pharisees. And when the Apostle Paul used the word he probably meant a "faction," and especially a "party" or "division" of the whole. He could therefore refer to his own hairesis. The word did not necessarily identify deviant teaching as such. Sometimes, however, these factions were led by self-willed and self-appointed leaders.\textsuperscript{32} Quite ironically, neither Stafford nor the editors of Christianity Today seem to sense that those who constitute the countercult movement are clearly self-willed and self-appointed, involved in forming competing schools of thought and practice among the people of God, and that their followers constitute a "faction" or "sect," or "a party [that] develops around a particular leader,"\textsuperscript{33} that is, a hairesis in the original sense of that word. How ironic.

I will now examine the role of a self-willed and self-appointed—and self-credentialed—anti-Mormon who seems to have been the one primarily responsible for creating the culture of contemporary countercultism.

**Walter Martin and the Jesus Movement**

One significant feature of the 1996 edition of DCRO is the addition of information found in a "Focus Topics Index" (pp. 55–66), a subject index, under the heading "Cults, General (Martin, Walter)." It seems that eighty-six countercultists want to be known as employing Walter Martin’s notion of what constitutes a "cult" (p. 58). And entries under "Cults, Evangelism of (Martin, Walter)" and "Cults, Terminology (Martin, Walter)" add

\textsuperscript{31} Stafford, "Kingdom of the Cult Watchers," 19.
\textsuperscript{32} Ibid., 22 (under a sidebar entitled "What Is Heresy?")
\textsuperscript{33} Ibid.
three additional agencies (p. 58). But Tolbert’s index appears flawed. A survey of the actual entries in DCRO indicates that 110 Evangelical ministries in the United States employ Martin’s approach to “cults.”34 Ten additional evangelical ministries in Canada and thirty-two elsewhere report using his approach, as do three Roman Catholic and two so-called behavioral agencies.

The late Walter Ralston Martin (born 10 September 1928, died at age 60 in June 1989), appears to continue to have a powerful impact in the countercult world. Tim Stafford has identified what he and others consider the primary source of the energy currently at work in the countercult movement.35 It was generated by Walter Martin, whom Stafford describes as “a feisty Baptist,” and as “colorful and media savvy.” It was Martin who somehow “brought cult apologetics out of obscurity into national prominence. When the Jesus movement erupted, he became a major influence.”36

Walter Martin, of course, “was not the first of the cult watchers, but he was certainly the most prominent.”37 By capturing the imagination of the Jesus People or Jesus movement (or Jesus Freaks, as they called themselves), he was able to turn many of these fugitives from counterculture protests and the drug scene into cult-bashers and heresy-hunters. Stafford grants that Martin started his attacks on the so-called “cults” in the 1950s. But other than some impact on Seventh-day Adventists, he seems to have had only marginal success in gaining a following. Martin published his infamous Kingdom of the Cults in 1965.38 But this

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34 Of these thirty-one specifically target Latter-day Saints.
35 Stafford, “Kingdom of the Cult Watchers,” 18–22.
36 Ibid., 20.
37 Ibid.
book was not influential until Martin attracted the attention of the bizarre Jesus movement in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

According to Stafford, Walter Martin "won many converts, had encouraged many would-be cult watchers into action, and had launched the Christian Research Institute (CRI)." Tolbert claims to have been "in contact with virtually every Christian cult-monitoring organization," and he has "yet to find someone who cannot remember the first time he/she heard Dr. [sic] Martin speak." Stafford quoted these words with approval. Many of those currently involved in the countercult industry, if Stafford and Tolbert are right, were radicalized street people—part of the drug culture—who in the late 1960s and early 1970s turned to Jesus as their way of expressing their cravings.

Walter Martin was blunt, aggressive, and self-assured. In 1991 the editors of Christianity Today reported that

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The Maze of Mormonism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1962). A number of editions and printings have been issued by Vision House and Bethany House. See, for example, Martin’s Kingdom of the Cults, rev. and expanded ed. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1997). He was constantly revising his books because they were (and still are) larded with numerous mistakes. On this matter see the apology offered by his friends who claim that “Martin was on the road, speaking, virtually every week of the year. His best-known work, The Kingdom of the Cults, was largely written from hotel rooms, so that many of its citations, done from memory, required correction in later editions.” See “Walter Martin, the ‘Answer Man,’” Christianity Today (7 October 1991): 21 (a sidebar to Tim Stafford’s essay entitled “Kingdom of the Cult Watchers”).

40 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 14.
41 Ibid.
42 Stafford began his article in Christianity Today with a description of the Spiritual Counterfeits Project (SCP), an agency started in 1973 by Tal Brooke, who “came to Christ in 1971 after spending years in India with a guru, Sai Baba,” and Brooks Alexander, who “had been ‘spiritually promiscuous’ before his conversion in 1969; drugs, communal living, and Transcendental Meditation were his background.” Ibid., 18. These fellows still operate SCP in the midst of “the human zoo” on Telegraph Avenue in Berkeley, California, where “men with nose rings (not to mention eyelid rings and lip rings)” are in abundance in a location that has “long been headquarters for the countercult fringe.” Ibid. For a largely sympathetic early account of the so-called Jesus Freaks, see Ronald M. Enroth, Edward E. Ericson, Jr., and C. Breckinridge Peters, The Jesus People: Old-Time Religion in the Age of Aquarius (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1972).
Walter Martin was an energetic, bluff man with a remarkable memory and a delight in the parry and thrust of debate. Although he did not receive his Ph.D. until he was in his late forties, his peers called him “Doctor” or “Doc” from the time he was in junior high school, leading to a classic problem: When introduced to an audience as “Dr. Martin,” should he explain that only his friends called him Doctor?43

This statement contains some truth. Walter Martin was energetic and he made a pretense of strength or confidence to gain a rhetorical advantage. Stafford quoted an evangelical sociologist as saying that Walter Martin “loved nothing better . . . than to get on TV with a Mormon bishop and nail him to the wall.”44 He was an aggressive rabble-rouser, opportunist, agitator, and firebrand. It was in these roles—as a demagogue—that he attracted the attention of the Jesus People, and if Tolbert and others are correct, launched the wave of “ministries” that now constitute much of the countercult movement.

The editors of Christianity Today attempt damage control by claiming that Walter Martin’s peers always called him “Doctor,” which led to “a classic problem”—whether to tell the truth or allow a false impression to continue. “Dr.” Walter Martin encouraged deference. His employees at the Christian Research Institute may have called him “Doctor.” But he also constantly referred to himself in advertisements for his lectures—even on his mother’s death certificate and newspaper obituary—as “Dr. Walter Martin.” And this was long before he purchased his “Ph.D.” from a correspondence school in California that did not require classroom instruction or a dissertation, and lacked classrooms, a library, and a faculty, except for four “deans.”45

A 1977 issue of the Christian Research Institute Newsletter, a publication for which Martin was responsible, claimed that “Dr.

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44 Ibid., 20.
45 For details concerning Walter Martin’s phony doctorate and other deceptions, see Richard I. Winwood, Take Heed That Ye Be Not Deceived, rev. and enl. (Salt Lake City: Winwood, 1995), 91–95. See also Robert L. and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive (Mesa, Ariz.: Brownsworth, 1981–95), 3:41–65.
Martin holds degrees from Stony Brook School, Adelphi University, Biblical Seminary [of New York], New York University and California Western University." Impressive? Stony Brook School is a high school. Martin attended Adelphi University for one term, from 16 September 1946 through 31 January 1947. He attended a summer session at what is now known as New York Theological Seminary. He was awarded a bachelor's degree in 1952 from unaccredited Shelton College. New York University accepted those credits, and in 1956 awarded him a master of arts degree in something called "Religious Education" from the School of Education, Health, Nursing, and Arts Profession. His "Religious Education" program did not require a thesis, though he claimed that he wrote one on the Jehovah's Witnesses.46

There is even more that is odd about "Dr." Walter Martin. He was ordained by a church within the Southern Baptist Convention on 16 July 1951. They did so reluctantly. One of his wives, Patricia Alice Toner, had divorced him on 20 December 1950. The "Reverend" Martin had been informed by his SBC congregation that, if he remarried, his license would be rescinded. Indeed, it was revoked in 1953 when supervising officials in his congregation learned that, contrary to the condition set on his ordination, he had remarried. Elain Jacobson divorced Martin in July 1973. Subsequently, the "Reverend" Martin falsely claimed to be a Southern Baptist and an American Baptist minister.47

In addition to his syndicated radio shows, his frequent public debates, and his addresses at various conferences and gatherings, Walter Martin also "authored 12 full-length books, 6 booklets and scores of articles and tracts which have been translated into a number of languages and circulated in the millions of copies around the world."48 He was also a professor of comparative religion and apologetics at Melodyland School of Theology in Anaheim, California, where his "professing" consisted of teach-

46 See Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait, 3:31–41, for the details concerning Walter Martin's academic credentials.
47 Ibid., 3:3–25. Individual Southern Baptist congregations ordain Southern Baptist preachers, and they also are the ones that defrock them or set conditions on their ordination and not the SBC as such.
48 Ibid., ix, quoting a Christian Research Institute brochure.
ing a Sunday school class. In 1984 Martin became the "director of the M.A. program at the Simon Greenleaf School of Law in Orange, California." Martin had a reputation for having a very fine memory.

On 21 September 1984, Mr. Robert D. Hughes, then executive director-treasurer of the Southern Baptist Convention of California indicated that Walter Martin’s attendance at the San Juan Capistrano Southern Baptist church, of which he was a member,

was very sporadic, according to the former pastor only one or two times a year during the time that he had knowledge of it. He assured me there was no real interest in Southern Baptist work or life but rather an opportunity on Mr. Martin’s part to use that church to further his own agenda.

Authors before Walter Martin had warned of the dangers of so-called “cults.” Tolbert correctly notes that William C. Irvine (1906–1964) and Jan Karel Van Baalen (1890–1968) had written books defending what they considered orthodox Christianity from the threat of what they considered heresy and heterodoxy, and there were others before them—James M. Gray (1851–1935) and Carlyle B. Haynes (1882–1958). But “very few . . . in the

49 Walter Martin “began teaching ‘Cults and the Occult’ at Melodyland School of Theology. His class at Melodyland evolved into a regular Sunday school class in Southern California,” according to “A Brief Chronology of Walter R. Martin’s Ministry,” found in the Christian Research Newsletter 2(4) ([1989]): [5]. This eight-page issue is devoted to accolades concerning Walter Martin, who had just passed away. Melodyland School of Theology was situated opposite Disneyland in Anaheim, California.

50 A Christian Research Institute brochure, and Christian Research Newsletter [5].

51 Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait, 3:18. Mr. Hughes added that “it appears also that his financial support of the church was in the same league as his attendance, only a small amount once in a great while.” When we note that Walter Martin’s wandering eye resulted in at least two ugly divorces, we begin to complete the picture of an outstanding “churchman.”

52 See, for example, Jan Karel Van Baalen, The Chaos of Cults: A Study in Present-day Isms (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1938). This book, first issued in 1938, was revised and enlarged in 1956, and the fourth edition appeared in 1962. See also Van Baalen, Christianity versus the Cults (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1958)
Christian cult-monitoring movement even know the writings of Irvine,"\(^{53}\) and the others are perhaps even less well-known. Tolbert insists that the countercult industry "cannot be traced to either Irvine or Van Baalen."\(^{54}\) According to Tolbert, "there is simply no social/historical link between these men and the living social entity" of the current countercult industry.\(^{55}\) Instead, "its origins are found in one man—who was in the right place at the right time with the right talents—Walter Martin."\(^{56}\)

Tolbert provides a plausible explanation for Walter Martin's influence on the evangelical countercult movement. While few, according to Tolbert, "would agree with him on every point of cult analysis, very, very few would deny his influence in their decision to pursue cult studies."\(^{57}\) While on the stump, warning of the dangers of "cults," Martin seems to have issued a call for others to join him in fighting the menace of so-called "cults." Thus, according to Tolbert,

shortly after Dr. [sic] Martin gave "the call," several full time Christian cult-monitoring organizations sprang up. It should be also be noted that virtually all of these early cult ministries' leaders worked/studied under Walter Martin before venturing out alone. . . . Within just a few years the Christian cult-monitoring movement grew so fast it took on a life of its own, not dependent on Walter Martin.\(^{58}\)

Walter Martin's ambition seems to have included political control of the countercult movement. Tolbert describes how, "on Valentine's Day, 1977, Martin attempted to politically organize the Christian cult-monitoring movement through a project called C.O.U.P. (Cult & Occult Unification Program), but was unsuccessful."\(^{59}\) Among other reasons, Martin "required consumers to

\(^{53}\) ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 12.
\(^{54}\) Ibid.
\(^{55}\) Ibid.
\(^{56}\) Ibid., 13.
\(^{57}\) Ibid.
\(^{58}\) Ibid.
\(^{59}\) Ibid.
pay $35 just for the privilege of purchasing from COUP.”60 Tolbert observes that Martin’s effort to gain political control of the countercult movement “would have led to, in effect, a market monopoly, as the evangelical church is essentially dependent on this movement for cult analysis.”61

Though Walter Martin failed in his effort to monopolize the countercult industry and thereby control the distribution of its literature, this does not seem to have detracted from his influence. Thus, according to Tolbert, though Walter Martin did “not exercise direct political control over the movement, his indirect influence—through print, radio, TV and speaking—simply cannot be ignored.”62

Tolbert indicates that countercult preachers “are drawn from a very broad base of the evangelical wing of Christianity. They range from Lutherans (Missouri Synod) to Freewill Methodists to Baptists to Presbyterians (evangelical) to Pentecostals and everything in between.”63 They are a genuinely mixed bag. But who exactly are these folks? Tolbert has what he thinks is the answer, and it seems at least plausible:

Dr. [sic] Martin rode the crest of the expansion of the Jesus Movement revival for over ten years. Every year he was booked at all the major Jesus Festivals. His magnum opus, The Kingdom of the Cults, did not skyrocket in sales until the Jesus Movement burgeoned, although it had been in print five years earlier. His teaching tapes were widely circulated at that time, much like underground albums. And it was in one of these very first teaching tapes, from the early 70s, that he gave the call for others to consider entering cult evangelism because there were “less than six people” doing it. Suddenly, many felt the call of God on their lives.64

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60 Ibid.
61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
63 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 12.
64 Ibid., 13. Tolbert adds that he “was one of these individuals.” Tolbert mentions the major quarrel going on in the countercult movement, including the
An Industry Assessment

Tolbert likes to refer to the “Christian cult-monitoring movement,”65 and he also refers to cult-monitoring agencies and ministries (p. v). But without the least trace of embarrassment he also refers to “the worldwide cult-monitoring industry” (p. v). He explains the evangelical countercult movement in strictly economic-mercenary terms. Hence the following:

Since the market which this industry serves, the evangelical wing of the Christian church, is limited, it necessarily follows that the number of individuals that can be employed full-time by this industry must also have an upper limit—a market saturation.66

Tolbert noted that this market “limit is financial,” even though he assumed, at least in 1988, that “there is no realistic limit of the need for the services and products offered by this industry.”67

Though not about to “suggest that the saturation point has already been reached,” in 1988 Tolbert was ready to grant that “it may not be too far off. Some of the early trends of market saturation are just beginning to appear in this industry.”68 Tolbert then provided several indicators of approaching market saturation. One indication is the narrowing of the focus of some countercult agencies. They were “once general cult research groups,” but they have come to concentrate on “the Big Three: Mormonism,


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65 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, “Preface,” and 1, 3, where this expression appears numerous times.
66 Ibid., 14; compare 23.
67 Ibid., 14 n. 16.
68 Ibid., 14.
Jehovah’s Witnesses and the New Age Movement.” Tolbert insists that “this specialization is clearly market driven.” “Perceiving difficulty ahead, they position themselves for a market niche where the diminishing returns will work best for them.”

But, on the other hand, Tolbert also reported that several organizations which were single-product organizations, studying only one cult, have either gone out of business or are now expanding their focus to include the Big Three. Another indicator of the approaching saturation point in the cult-monitoring industry is that at least 10% of the organizations go out of business each year.

What market does Tolbert think is served by the countercult industry? Typically countercult preachers strive to warn fellow evangelicals against the dreaded “cults.” They are busy sounding an alarm calculated to frighten fellow evangelicals into paying to hear their lectures or into purchasing other products. And it is evangelicals who, for the most part, end up purchasing their videos, tapes, films, tracts, magazines, pamphlets, books, and so forth, and paying for their radio and TV shows and public lectures. In order to sell their product, countercult ministers must spread fear and loathing among those who can be mobilized against supposedly demonic forces.

Tolbert’s economic explanation of the countercult industry seems to uncover something of the dynamics of the movement. If we assume that Tolbert is essentially correct, and we are dealing with a business, we have an explanation for Walter Martin’s role of guru to the movement, and also for the nasty quarreling that goes on within the countercult movement as competing entrepreneurs struggle for access to a limited number of actual or potential consumers. Though this was not his intention, Tolbert’s explanation also accounts for at least some of the tone, rhetorical violence, sensationalism, outright hatred, and utter disregard for the truth commonly manifested by countercult ministries busy attacking

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69 Ibid.
70 Ibid.
71 Ibid.
the faith of others, and each other. Though a surprisingly large number of individuals and agencies are in the anti-Mormon bigotry business, they are a rather motley crew, with little intellectual firepower and often, as others who are not Latter-day Saints have demonstrated, with unseemly histories and reputations.72

For Tolbert, the market targeted by countercultists is what he likes to call “the Evangelical wing of Christianity.”73 The market is not “Christians from the liberal wing of the Church.” One would not expect those folks, who more or less constitute the membership of the mainline denominations, “to view Mormons, Jehovah’s Witnesses and Jesus Only adherents as anything more than slightly different expressions of the Christian faith.”74 And “the largest single market within the evangelical church” is “the Southern Baptist Convention.”75

Why should evangelicals consider Protestant liberals Christian? Liberals may deny virtually everything dear to the heart of evangelicals—they may be bored by talk about the Trinity and have jettisoned or radically modified notions of sin and redemption. Thus Tolbert has the problem of explaining how evangelicals can claim that the Mormons are not Christians, while Protestant liberals, who differ from evangelicals far more radically than do Latter-day Saints, are still embraced as merely a different “wing” of the larger Christian “church.” Why should devout Calvinists, whose views are rejected by evangelicals, be considered Christian? There are radical differences between strict Calvinists and some forms of evangelical religiosity. Tolbert’s explanation is that “polemics” (verbal warfare) takes place on controversial subjects within the body of the Christian “church,” while “apologetics [defense of the faith] is practiced when a Christian defends his/her faith from attackers outside of the Christian church, whether they

72 Fred Wheeler, who operates Real Life Ministries out of Columbus, Missouri, charges Bob Larson Ministries with corruption. Wheeler is, among other things, troubled by the kinds of things that Robert and Rosemary Brown have uncovered concerning many prominent anti-Mormons. See They Lie in Wait to Deceive, 4 vols., and compare with “Bob Larson Ministries” on the World Wide Web. The brawl between the Tanners and Ed Decker also ought not to be ignored, if only for its entertainment value.
73 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 1.
74 Ibid.
75 Ibid., 13.
are secular humanists, Satanists, or Mormons."

When, for example Christians "fervently argue their case as in the Calvinist/Arminian debate," in such "theological polemics both parties debating a controversial subject recognize each other as part of the body of Christ." So the Calvinist and liberal wings of Christianity are presumably still Christian, even though each in its own way rejects fundamental evangelical tenets.

On the other hand, since countercult evangelicals will not grant that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is in any sense Christian, apologetics is practiced against it. This currently consists of dogmatically challenging its standing as Christian by insisting that Latter-day Saints differ on fundamental issues from those evangelicals tend to define as Christian. Presumably differences within Protestantism (and especially within the evangelical faction) are not over essentials. Needless to say, there is little agreement even among evangelicals over what exactly constitutes a fundamental. If Protestant liberals are really part of the "body of Christ," why exclude anyone who wants to be known as a Christian?

But I think that more and better reasons exist than those provided by Tolbert for these anomalies: (1) Evangelicals would seem foolish if they were to insist that the bulk of those still worshiping within the mainline denominations are not Christian. Even though they are thought of as dangerous heretics, they are still Christian heretics. (2) Liberals have much less in common with evangelicals than do Latter-day Saints. And these days few if any Southern Baptists are in real danger of being lured into becoming Protestant liberals. Hence, we are dealing with a turf fight. (3) Evangelicals seem to need enemies against which they can define themselves. And for various reasons neither Protestant liberals nor Calvinists will do. (4) Some evangelicals seem to need targets for their jeremiads and Latter-day Saints have always been the object of sectarian derision, thereby providing a ready target for wanton attacks. Hence, it does not seem unreasonable, even to evangelicals

76 Ibid., 1.
77 Ibid.
78 Evangelicals also constitute a mere faction within Protestant Christianity. For Tolbert they form a wing of what he considers the larger Christian "church."
like Tolbert, to lump Mormons, that is, Latter-day Saints, in with secular humanists and Satanists. Countercultists see nothing odd in this kind of rhetorical exaggeration and overkill. Such linguistic nonsense only works when one has a desperate need, come what may, for a demonology.

It is as if someone were to insist that a Gala (a currently popular but relatively new variety of apple) is not an apple at all simply because it is not exactly like a Granny Smith (a somewhat older and perhaps better-known variety of apple). In fact, our apologist for the Granny Smith variety of apple as the only true apple might claim that the Gala is not as close to a historic, orthodox apple—the Granny Smith—as is the very old Roman crab-apple. A Gala, our apologist might exclaim, is really a rock or a bird, but not a true Granny Smith apple and hence not an apple at all. In my analogy the one insisting that only a Granny Smith should be known as an apple will have neglected to notice that they have conveniently overlooked older varieties like the venerable Red Delicious, and even much older varieties like Esopus Spitzenburg. And he may, if it suits his political purposes, also insist that the Winter Banana, White Winter Pearmain, and Mutsu are Granny Smith apples merely because they are more or less green, while neglecting many obvious differences. And there will also be among the defenders of Granny Smith as the only true historic (even biblical) apple those who will insist that only an Early Grannie (Cooper cultivar) or a Red (Murray Gem) Granny is an authentic Granny Smith apple. Of course, with apples this linguistic legerdemain is obvious, but with religion, politics, and other merchandising, anything seems proper when one is marketing a product or defending one’s turf.

Up from Cottage Industry

Just how extensive is the professional anti-Mormon slice of what Alexis de Tocqueville once wryly described as the American “business of religion”? In his 1992 review of anti-Mormon literature, William O. Nelson indicated that “networks of anti-Mormon organizations operate in the United States.”79 As evidence for this claim he produced the 1986 or 1988 version of

DCRO, which he said, "contains more than a hundred anti-Mormon listings." But that still understates the size of the anti-Mormon segment of the sectarian countercult movement.

The index to the 1996 edition of DCRO lists 102 individuals and agencies who wanted to be known as specializing in spreading anti-Mormon propaganda (p. 57). But the index seems flawed. Of the sectarian countercult individuals and agencies listed in DCRO, I have counted 133 operating in the United States that want to be known as targeting the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In addition, in the portion of Section 1 of DCRO which lists countercult "ministries" that employ an "Evangelical Approach" to "cults," an additional eight "ministries" in Canada (pp. 26-27) and eight more operating elsewhere in the world (pp. 28-32) are listed as explicitly anti-Mormon.

Countercultists engage in apologetics if not polemics in disseminating religious propaganda. Much of the countercult movement attacks those whose beliefs are not fully in accord with whatever they assume to be "historic, biblical Christianity" as they understand such things. But countercultists are often quite ahistorical, conveniently forgetting the details of a vast array of quarrels, defections, deviations, and schisms that constitute the history of Christianity. Those who imagine a single untainted historic Christianity that flows from the Bible end up ignoring the history of those who claimed to be Christians; they thereby deny that most of what happened since the death of the apostles is Christian, since "historic, biblical Christianity" in its pristine purity they imagine to be the ideology of their own rather recently fashioned heresy.

In this way, playing a question-begging game with definitions, one faction of Christians, who have come on the scene only recently, suddenly claim the right to determine who is and who is not Christian. These folks charge those with whom they disagree

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80 Ibid.
81 Two anti-Mormon agencies are found in Australia, and one each in New Zealand, Puerto Rico, Russia, Samoa, Spain, and Great Britain. These anti-Mormon agencies in the United States and elsewhere are sometimes able to focus or generate fear and hostility against the Church of Jesus Christ. This can be seen, for example, when a new temple is announced. Such acts by anti-Mormon ministers are one more pitiful indication of ambition, gullibility, and depravity.
with worshiping a "different Jesus," of having a different "god" and of following a different gospel, of being pagans who worship demons, and so forth. By changing just a few details they can move from attacking Latter-day Saints to attacking Roman Catholics or Calvinists or anyone who threatens their turf or seems vulnerable. They simply refuse to see that theirs is but one of a great many possible interpretations of the Bible. The sufficiency as well as the inerrancy and infallibility they attribute to the Bible they also conveniently attach to their own idiosyncratic and somewhat eccentric understanding of its teachings and message.

For these and various other reasons, those who consult DCRO should not assume that they are being introduced to individuals and agencies involved in genuine research. Instead, they are being introduced to preachers who sometimes claim that they are engaged in research. It turns out, however, that these efforts yield partisan propaganda. Countercultists have learned to take on the trappings of academic institutions in an effort to establish credibility. Thus one encounters items published by agencies with names like "Christian Research Institute" (p. 6). But these are actually little parachurches. Something called the "Institute for Religious Research" turns out to be front for the Gospel Truths Ministry (p. 14), and the CRI, which was founded in 1960 by the demagogic Walter Martin, offers radio talk shows by Hank Hanegraaff, no less than the "Bible Answer Man" (p. 6).

In 1988 Tolbert showed that the countercult "movement generates 36 periodicals reaching at least 100,000 people on a regular basis."82 The current numbers are higher; this is a growth industry. One must include, in addition to leaflets, tracts, booklets, and pamphlets, "an increasing stream of full-length books." In 1988 the cumulative total of these items "number[ed] over a thousand."83 There are more now. And the countercult industry has gotten into the film business. The best-known example is Ed Decker's unseemly The God Makers. "At the height of its popularity, The God Makers was viewed by 250,000 people per month."84 Tolbert holds that "the docu-drama film technique" employed in The God Makers "is especially well fitted to the

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82 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 15.
83 Ibid.
84 Ibid.
Christian market since its cost is comparatively low while still retaining a high-quality production and by nature lends itself to controversial subjects."85

The advent of films like *The God Makers*, according to Tolbert, has had a profound impact on the countercult industry. For one thing,

with the advent of these films whole new chapters of Ex-Mormons for Jesus, Saints Alive and Ex-Jehovah’s Witnesses for Jesus sprang up. This pre-packaging of cult apologetics allowed them to simply purchase a film and go on-the-road showing it in churches and civic auditoriums.86

There are hints that Ed Decker tried to franchise his kind of anti-Mormonism. He appears to have been eager to provide the product for attacks on Latter-day Saints by preachers integrated into a larger organization under his control.87 But why such vertical integration?

**The Old Cash Nexus**

Religion on radio and TV—the so-called Electronic Church—provides an avenue for countercult preachers to do their thing. But all this costs money. The John Ankerberg Show,88 according to Tolbert, has thus “entered the marketplace.”89 But Tolbert admits that “many Christians complain about the excessive

85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 16.
87 Inspection of Decker’s papers, currently available in Special Collections at the Utah State University, will be necessary to figure out exactly what he was up to with his Saints Alive ministries. It may be that Saints Alive was his effort to more or less franchise and thereby control anti-Mormon activities. And something like this may also have been going on in his relationships with the ministries known, often inaccurately, as Ex-Mormons for Jesus.
89 *ARC Cult Literature Index*, 1987, 15.
solicitation for monies on The John Ankerberg Show.90 He then excuses Ankerberg’s antics on the grounds that those who complain do not realize “the tremendous amount of money required to air a nation-wide program . . . on secular TV.”91 Here we approach a key feature of the countercult industry. Much of the energy of those who have found a niche on TV and radio is directed to recruiting money.92

But the same abject begging for money is also found in much of the anti-Mormon literature I have examined. Tolbert is critical of this deportment—he indicates “that a great many articles” in the countercult periodical literature “which begin as analytical, critiquing a cult, somehow transform around the middle into a public relations article, talking about what this particular ministry is doing and finally ends up soliciting money.”93 He suggests that, “ethics aside, . . . this is clearly bad journalism.”94 Hardly an anti-Mormon tabloid turns up that does not report the dire financial situation of the sponsoring ministry, accompanied by much groveling for money to save the desperate ministry from impending collapse, to finance some trip,95 or to purchase a new

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90 Ibid.
91 Ibid.
92 One does not have to reach back to Jimmy and Tammy Bakker or Jimmy Swaggart to experience preachers pandering for money. One only has to tune in to the folksy Kenneth Copeland preaching financial prosperity or Morris Cerullo, who seems to have taken over for the Bakkers, for wonderful examples of preachers begging for contributions.
93 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 26.
94 Ibid.
95 For example, Steven J. Dealy, who directs Mission to Mormons out of Colorado Springs, Colorado, could not make it to Vernal, Utah, to protest the temple there, but he has plans to put together a team to witness at the open house to be held this coming summer for the new LDS temple in Preston, England. And “in order to prepare for this outreach,” he claimed that he was “planning a nine day fact-finding/prayer journey to Great Britain during the month of December.” This trip would enable him “to meet with local Christian leaders, arrange evangelism training for English congregations, secure accommodations for our team, and to pray on location for the upcoming outreach.” He adds: “We are undertaking this special trip at a time when donations to our work are at an all-time low. We were not able to minister at the Vernal, Utah temple opening in October as we hoped because of financial constraints. Instead, we are taking measures to ‘tighten our belts’ and lower MTM’s already small operating costs. Planning a trip to England is a step of faith on our part, believing it is the Lord’s leading to
addition to the library. As I have shown, Tolbert believes that countercult literature is aimed primarily at “the evangelical wing of Christianity.” And, as I have already shown, he is not unaware of a struggle going on between countercult ministries attempting to tap this market. Perhaps we have found the reason for Decker’s Saints Alive franchises, or those called Ex-Mormons for Jesus—they may have been intended as vehicles for dealing with market competition, and of enhancing the status of their bosses.

In some instances countercult preachers may attempt to evangelize those they consider to be the victims of “cults.” This, however, is rare. They often seem leery of Latter-day Saints. My experience is that anti-Mormons are sometimes reluctant to make their literature available to those they have reason to believe are faithful Latter-day Saints. They seem to prefer conversations with those who are marginalized by their temptations or their own ignorance and hence are disaffected. Anti-Mormons prefer those already “coming out of Mormonism,” to use their trendy language.

On the other hand, anti-Mormons may join in consortia to pass out tabloids at temple dedications. But even these efforts are not really aimed at persuading Latter-day Saints. Instead, they are intended to keep evangelicals from being lured into what they consider the maze of Mormonism. Or to show their constituents that they are fighting the good fight. But in a few instances copies of an anti-Mormon book—sometimes highly disguised—have been mailed to Latter-day Saints. This is about as close as

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96 ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 23.
97 They may hang around a temple open house only long enough to get a photograph, showing them passing out their tracts. They then include this photograph in their next tabloid.
98 See, for example, Charles M. (Chuck) Larson’s By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), which Gospel Truths Ministry mailed to thirty or thirty-five thousand Latter-day Saints. Larson’s work has been shown to be inaccurate and deceptive by those who can read Egyptian. There is nothing in Larson’s book to indicate that Wesley P. Walters, who provided the “Forward [sic],” was an anti-Mormon Presbyterian pastor, other than the statement in the “Acknowledgments” thanking “the later [sic] Rev. Wesley P. Walters, for his contagious enthusiasm and knowledgeable background.” Ibid., 237. The final chapter in Larson’s book was written with Floyd McElveen. Ibid., 189.
many anti-Mormons dare come to real conversations with genuine Latter-day Saints.99

**Large Numbers, Small Operations, Little Firepower**

DCRO reveals the dimensions of both the larger countercult movement and its anti-Mormon component. Tolbert lists and describes 561 sectarian agencies and individuals (of which 444 are located in the USA and 28 in Canada). These are said to employ an evangelical approach (section 1, pp. 1-32) to “cult research.” From an LDS perspective, the extent of this type of anti-Mormonism may be surprising. But these numbers are somewhat deceiving; most of the anti-Mormon ministries are without permanent staff—they are mostly merely individuals or Mom and Pop operations. And they come and go.100 For the most part they do not produce a literature; they peddle what others produce. They usually operate on a shoestring. In 1991, “only eight or nine” of the evangelical countercult ministries have paid staff and do original research. Most are shoestring organizations run by a handful of volunteers with a fervent interest in a particular aberrant group. Naturally, such groups come and go. But their overall number is rapidly increasing, and the largest countercult organizations seem to be growing.101

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99 Some sectarian preachers, however, are more than eager for unseemly confrontations with the Saints. For example, Kurt Van Gorden, who currently lives in Victorville, California, and who operates Jude 3 Missions, relishes engaging in polemical confrontations with Latter-day Saints not only before audiences but also in correspondence.

100 Tolbert estimates that ten percent of evangelical countercult agencies disappear or become inactive every year. See ARC Cult Literature Index, 1987, 14. However, these are more than replaced by others so that the total number is increasing.

101 Stafford, “Kingdom of the Cult Watchers,” 18, paraphrasing Tolbert.
Tolbert lists a first tier consisting of the “major Christian outreaches to Mormons” (p. 47): 102

Dick Baer, Ex-Mormons and Christian Alliance (Orangevale, California). Ex-LDS.
Bill McKeever, Mormonism Research Ministry (El Cajon, California).
Ed Decker, Saints Alive in Jesus (Issaquah, Washington). Ex-LDS.
Chuck Sackett, Sword of the Shepherd Ministries (Westlake, California). Ex-LDS. 103
Thelma (Granny) Geer, To Mormons, With Love (Safford, Arizona). Ex-LDS.
Sandra and Jerald Tanner, Utah Lighthouse Ministry (Salt Lake City, Utah). Ex-LDS.
John L. Smith, Utah Missions, Inc. (Marlow, Oklahoma).

My own list of major anti-Mormon ministries is somewhat shorter. The following ministries currently seem to me to be the major producers of anti-Mormon literature:
The Tanners, Utah Lighthouse Ministry.
Ed Decker, Saints Alive.
Bill McKeever, Mormonism Research Ministry.

There is, in addition, a second tier of anti-Mormon ministries. These sometimes produce a newsletter or a tabloid, and they may produce leaflets or tracts, and an occasional pamphlet or booklet. I include the following in this list: 104

Richard D. Baer, Ex-Mormons and Christian Alliance. Ex-LDS
John Farkas, Berean Christian Ministries. (Webster, New York). Ex-LDS. Among other things, John, and his wife, Phyllis,

102 Tolbert lists these agencies alphabetically by ministry name.
103 Chuck Sackett’s telephone number is currently unlisted; letters to his ministry are returned without a forwarding address, and I have been unable to locate a telephone number for his business. It seems that with the death of Dolly, his wife, he ceased his anti-Mormon activities.
104 Listed alphabetically by the name of the minister.
coordinate the anti-Mormon activities at the annual Hill
Cumorah Pageant held in Palmyra, New York.
Thelma (Granny) Geer, To Mormons, With Love. Ex-LDS.
Hank Hanegraaff, CRI (San Juan Capistrano, California).
Bob Larson Ministries (Denver, Colorado).
Jim Robertson, Concerned Christians (Mesa, Arizona). Ex-LDS.
James Spencer, Through the Maze (Boise, Idaho). Ex-LDS.
Kurt Van Gorden, Jude 3 Ministries (Orange, California). Van
Gorden also runs something called Utah Gospel Mission (also
out of a P.O. Box in Orange, California, and a branch of his
Jude 3 Ministries which he calls Utah Gospel Association (Salt
Lake City, Utah). (See pp. 5, 23, for details.)
James Walker, Watchman Fellowship, Inc. (Arlington, Texas). Ex-
LDS.
James White, Alpha & Omega Ministries, Inc. (Phoenix, Arizona).
Clodette Woodhouse, Concerned Christians & Former Mormons
(MV, California). Ex-LDS.
Dennis A. Wright, UMI (Marlow, Oklahoma).

There is, in addition, a third tier of perhaps as many as four
hundred individuals and agencies. Many of these do not focus
their attention exclusively or even primarily on the Church of
Jesus Christ. Matthew Roper, who has surveyed countercult agen-
cies who do not explicitly target Latter-day Saints, has found that
most of these (see pp. 1–25) are involved in spreading anti-
Mormon propaganda.¹⁰⁵ Some of these third-tier agencies are the
work of apostates who attack the Church of Jesus Christ, while the
others merely include Latter-day Saints among the “cults” they
assail. If these agencies produce a literature, it tends to be deriva-
tive—lifted from other literature—or entirely lacking in substance,
originality, and documentation.

¹⁰⁵ A recognized authority on these matters is Gordon Melton, director of
the Institute for the Study of American Religion at Santa Barbara, California. A
reporter claimed that Melton told her that “some four hundred ‘anticult’ groups
are currently aimed specifically at Mormonism.” Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 80
n. 17 (citing Peggy Stack from the Salt Lake Tribune, 10 June 1995). Melton
told this reporter that “another two hundred groups . . . target Mormons along
with Jehovah’s Witnesses.” Ibid., 184 n. 17. Givens also cited the third edition
of DCRO.
Sectarian and Secular Anticult Movements

I have a few minor quibbles with DCRQ. Even though in one place there is brief mention of a "secular anticult movement" (p. v), it seems unfortunate that more attention is not given to the distinction between the religious or sectarian countercult movement and radically secular anticult ideology and literature. Instead, for quite understandable reasons, Tolbert attends to the former and tends somewhat to ignore the latter.

The distinction between secular and sectarian anticult ideology is recognized by Latter-day Saints who have found their faith being attacked by preachers and also those who claim that faith in God is inconsistent with secular, naturalistic assumptions. These are radically different points of view. Sociologists and others with an academic interest in contemporary manifestations of religion have distinguished between essentially different stands of opposition to prophetic truth claims. Thus, according to Massimo Introvigne, an astute Roman Catholic scholar, the anticult movement contains "two separate and at times conflicting submovements, one secular and the other sectarian."106 This distinction can be generalized and applied to the full range of what Tolbert calls the "cult monitoring industry" (pp. v, vi, vii).

At least by the 1980s it became common for writers to refer to "anticult movements."107 However, this label was distracting: it tended to lump together secular and religious movements. This also had the unfortunate effect of confusing two different strands of anti-Mormonism. Hence, by the end of that decade, Introvigne reports, he and J. Gordon Melton began refining the terminology used to identify these distinct anticult movements. They divided the anticult world into secular anticult and religious countercult agencies, assumptions, and ideologies.

Elsewhere I have shown that there are two kinds of anti-Mormonism. The first is the widely recognized Protestant sectarian anti-Mormon movement, exemplified by Utah Missions, Inc. (UMI) and Utah Lighthouse Ministry (ULM). These and

107 Ibid.
perhaps other anti-Mormon agencies were operating prior to the
time when the Jesus movement found something attractive in
Walter Martin’s crusade in the late 1960s and early 1970s, which
led to the toadstooling that has taken place in the countercult (and
hence also anti-Mormon) movement.

The second is an aggressive and perhaps somewhat more
sophisticated secular opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ.
Currently its leading figure is George D. Smith, wealthy owner of
Signature Books, and publisher of what sometimes turns out to be
anti-Mormon literature. He also funds the production and publi-
cation of this literature through his tax-exempt foundation known
as Smith Research Associates. He leverages various magazines and
organizations operating on the margins of the Mormon academic
community. He is not averse to borrowing from sectarian anti-
Mormonism when that suits his purposes. Of course, in other set-
tings sectarian anti-Mormons would be his mortal enemies.108

We locate George D. Smith's agenda when we discover that he
publishes in Free Inquiry, which is the major atheist magazine in
the United States. He has worked closely with the Buffalo-based
operation of Paul Kurtz, which publishes Free Inquiry,109 even
sponsoring with Kurtz a so-called Humanist/Mormon dialogue.110
George D. Smith facilitated the publication of the proceedings of
this “dialogue” by both Prometheus Books, the leading atheist
press in the United States, and his own Signature Books.111 He

108 For two sectarian anti-Mormon books published by George D. Smith
Jr., see Rodger I. Anderson, Joseph Smith’s New York Reputation Reexamined
(Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), which was originally published as
“Joseph Smith’s Early Reputation Revisited,” Journal of Pastoral Practice 4/3
(1980): 71–108; 4/4 (1980): 72–105, which at the time was edited by the late
Reverend Walters; and H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, Inventing
Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record (Salt Lake City: Smith
Research Associates, 1994). Smith has also been involved in financing and pub-
lishing sectarian atheist and anti-Mormon literature.

109 See, for example, George D. Smith Jr., “Joseph Smith and the Book of
Midgley, “George Dempster Smith, Jr., on the Book of Mormon,” Review of

110 For the details, see Midgley, “Atheists and Cultural Mormons,”
229–43.

111 Ibid., 229–97, for a detailed response to George D. Smith, ed., Religion,
Feminism, and Freedom of Conscience: A Mormon/Humanist Dialogue
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has also been involved with the Council for Democratic and Secular Humanism (CODESH), and with its front organizations Prometheus Books and the Committee for the Scientific Examination of Religion (CSER), all of which have been crafted by Kurtz and others to push atheist indoctrination.

The failure of DCRO to include a listing of these and perhaps other radically secular anticult individuals and agencies is lamentable, but it is also understandable. Pement and Tolbert seem to have begun collecting information on those they describe as evangelical countercultists while they were themselves involved in evangelizing the victims of what they considered “cults.” And they also appear to have been eager to provide, through DCRO, the means for networking and hence for cooperation among those engaged in denigrating so-called “cults.” Instead of making a radical distinction between sectarian countercult and secular anticult movements, they have chosen to distinguish between behaviorist, sociological, Roman Catholic, and evangelical approaches to cult study.

Unfortunately, this classification tends to obscure a much more fundamental distinction. The so-called behaviorist and some of the sociological individuals and agencies are, in fact, what Introvigne and others describe as secular anticult agencies. But, instead of including the most radically secular anticult agencies in their directory, the authors of DCRO have made a different and somewhat less basic distinction between the ideologies underlying the work of the agencies they list.

In addition to being anti-Catholic, anti-Mormon, and anti-lots of other things, the countercult movement is sometimes explicitly anti-humanist. “Secular humanists”—dogmatic atheists—are charged by those in the countercult movement with spreading a dangerous, demonic, false religion. The label “secular humanism” was originally popularized by Paul Kurtz, who is heavily involved in the production and distribution of militantly atheist propaganda. Through a network of agencies, Kurtz and his associates attack all manifestations of belief in God and hence all

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(Buffalo, N.Y., and Salt Lake City: Prometheus Books and Signature Books, 1994).
varieties of Christianity, including the entire countercult movement.

The editors of DCRO seem to have difficulty dealing with a radically anti-Christian movement bent on liberating everyone from illusions or delusions about God. The distinctions made in DCRO between anticult agencies thus tend to blur the differences between competing religious ideologies. And even when they recognize it as a powerful enemy and classify it as a competing religion, countercult preachers are not sure that secular humanism is a "cult." Countercultists like to reserve the label *cult* for those with whom they share at least some common ideological ground.

**Linguistic Legerdemain—Countercult Distortion**

But this is not the entire story, since many within the countercult movement have misgivings about Roman Catholicism, Orthodoxy, or Protestant liberalism, but tend to be cautious about charging them with being "cults" or denying that they are in some sense Christian. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC), if its current Interfaith Witness Resources catalogue is any indication, classifies Lutherans, Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholics, Episcopalians, members of the Churches of Christ (Disciples of Christ?) and Seventh-day Adventists as something vaguely called "American Christianity," even though only the last two groups have their origin in the United States. The SBC labels Jehovah’s Witnesses, the Way International, the Unification Church, and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as "cults/sects/new religious movements." Even an apologist would have difficulty not granting that the SBC is an "American Christianity." Would such an apologist deny that the SBC is a "new religious movement," since it is no older than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints? But why not label the SBC a cult?

Well, the reason is that the word *cult*, despite its original harmless meaning, where it identified the practices, that is, the rituals and hence worship, of any group of believers, is currently used to discredit the faith of those other fellows, whoever they may be. Can this practice be justified? Alan Gomes, who teaches at Biola University’s Talbot School of Theology, admits right up front that "our English word *cult* comes from the Latin word *cultus*, which
is a form of the verb *colere*, meaning 'to worship or give reverence to a deity.'\textsuperscript{112} But "this general meaning is too broad for the present purpose,"\textsuperscript{113} which includes, among other things, blasting away at the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Gomes wants to use the word *cult*, defined in some special, narrow way, so that all the current emotive, pejorative power of the word can work its nefarious magic.

In order to do this, Gomes must substitute for the original meaning of the word *cult* what he calls "the preferred definition." By this he means *his* preferred definition, which turns out to be a way of charging that Latter-day Saints are not Christian,\textsuperscript{114} since he holds that "cults" are, by definition, not Christian. But does this argument make sense? And is Gomes even consistent? Gomes protests when he suspects that someone has used biblical language in ways that he thinks deviate from the meanings he attributes to the Bible. Thus he declares that "the cults typically use Christian vocabulary but radically redefine the terms."\textsuperscript{115} But, ironically, this is exactly what he has done with the word *cult*.

Gomes admits that the word *cult* is used in Acts 17 "both of the worship of false gods (v. 23) and of the true God (v. 25)."\textsuperscript{116} In other words, every practice of any group of believers, whether their beliefs are true or false, can properly be described in the language of the New Testament as a cult. Had Professor Gomes stuck with the way the New Testament uses the word *cult*, he would not have been able (1) to blast others with a currently pejorative label or (2) to distinguish Christianity and cults. (3) He would also have had to admit that his faction, his version of Christian practice, and the ideology that supports it, constitute a "cult." He apparently does not sense the question-begging that stands behind his effort to derive political and propaganda advantage from the loose use of a pejorative label. His attack on what he chooses arbitrarily to label as dangerous non-Christian "cults" thus turns out to be a

\textsuperscript{112} See Alan W. Gomes, *Unmasking the Cults* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1995), 7.

\textsuperscript{113} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{114} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 31.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 7.
game of manipulating definitions in order to appear to win a partisan battle.

When countercult ministers charge that others with whom they disagree are involved in a cult, they are obviously using currently fashionable political language in what one would assume are essentially controversies between competing modes of faith and practice—that is, in the biblical sense of the word, between competing cults. But in these controversies the label *cult* is employed to disadvantage and disparage a competing truth claim without having to confront the substance of that claim. The previously harmless word *cult* is thus wrested from its biblical context and radically redefined in an effort to persuade others that competing truth claims are non-Christian and even demonic.

“Cults” are thus currently portrayed as dangerous, aberrant, and inauthentic from within a particular construction of Christian belief and practice—that of the one making the charge. The current effort to label the Church of Jesus Christ a “cult” involving essentially pagan behavior and faith is an effort on the part of polemicists struggling to attack a competing faith. The countercult movement defends versions of Christian faith by employing derogatory labeling rather than with substantive arguments.

Latter-day Saints should not be offended when they find their faith being described as a “cult.” Instead, they should feel sorrow for those who stoop to such nonsense. They should see this tactic as part of an effort to construct reality by playing with labels. This is a common feature of political struggles between competing ideologies. And such partisan labeling amounts to bigotry.

**Bigotry and Persecution**

One study concludes that “the only quality that all” those on the receiving end of religious bigotry “possessed in common was some combination of doctrine and practice which clashed with orthodox Christianity.”117 Hence, each group got relatively uniform responses from those who preached the “orthodox reli-

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gion," whatever that was. Efforts are always made to show that the 
offending group's beliefs are such that persecution is justified.

It should not be surprising to discover that countercultists now 
insist that Latter-day Saints worship what they call "a different 
Jesus," and so forth. From their perspective, the Saints are not 
Christian. Or, as one anti-Mormon luminary recently opined, 
Latter-day Saints are no more Christian than are the Hindus.118 
This is exactly the kind of blatant nonsense that fuels the bigotry 
business.119

However, as I have shown, countercultists tend to grant that the 
liberals who are found within the mainline Protestant denomina­
tions are Christian. In other words, there is among those in the 
countercult movement a solid anti-Mormon stance that yields the 
claim that the Saints are not in any sense or degree Christian, while 
there is much less certainty about some other people whose de­
nominations have traditionally fit under the Protestant umbrella. 
But often these people have beliefs and practices that do not 
conform to the standards of some presumed biblical orthodoxy.

Where do Protestant congregations and clergy tend to stand 
on the countercult movement? Some, but fortunately not all, are 
open to anti-Mormon propaganda. Unfortunately, some congre­
gations constitute a ready-made constituency—in Tolbert's terms, 
a market—for preachers who travel around giving lectures and 
showing films, and hence they form an outlet for scurrilous hate 
literature. Some clergy are only too eager to turn their pulpits 
over to such people.

The old mainline Protestant denominations are, as is well­
known, currently experiencing a significant decline in both mem­
bership and influence, if not prestige. And the wealth, power, and 
influence of those in the new evangelicalisms, though not neces­
sarily their prestige, are growing outside and perhaps even within 
the boundaries of the old denominations. The more radical

118 For Sandra Tanner's absurd remark, see the Southern Baptist film 
entitled "The Mormon Puzzle." This 70-minute film was produced by the North 
American Mission Board of the SBC in 1997 to equip their preachers to witness 
to and avoid being influenced by Latter-day Saints prior to, during, and after their 
annual convention, which is to be held 9-11 June 1998 in Salt Lake City.
119 For a wonderful treatment of these matters, see Givens, Viper on the 
Hearth.
offspring of the new evangelicalisms have moved aside the older and somewhat staid if not pallid denominations. And since Protestant anarchy does not encourage or even permit responsible control of religious excesses, all kinds of churches, parachurches, ministries, outreaches, movements, or whatever they might be called, are started or “planted” by enterprising preachers. Many of those with the will to preach seem able to find an audience of some kind. And if they are possessed with the right combination of audacity and personality they can be found providing entertainment on radio and TV as part of the weird Electronic Church, or performing in one of the megachurches that have recently sprouted in or near wealthy suburbs where people can be dazzled by an emotional parade of pat formulas, always coupled with much wretched groveling for money. And what should not be overlooked is the fact that preachers galvanize and attract followers by attacking those they picture as dangerous innovators, heretics, or unwanted competition.

If Tolbert and others are correct, anti-Mormons often have their roots in the fertile seedbed of religious emotions found in the counterculture Jesus movement. Anti-Mormonism is focused on emotionally charged theological disputes by people with a deep need for controversy. Anti-Mormon rhetoric revolves around slogans about grace alone, the sufficiency of the Bible, who is or is not a Christian, and about the Trinity. Anti-Mormons strive to generate fear and loathing; they organize campaigns to exclude Latter-day Saints from public affairs, to prevent the building of chapels and especially temples, and so forth.

Anti-Mormonism is accepted within congregations of professed Christians in part because it functions as a way of maintaining or even generating group identity and cohesion. In what is about the best history of the recent so-called anticult movement in America, it is argued that “persecution has increased the internal solidarity of oppressed groups as well as the fervor and commitment of individual members.” I agree. But dehumanizing hate language also mobilizes those responsible for persecution. Groups may define their boundaries, rejuvenate their members, and recruit people to their cause by attacking others. Anti-Mormonism is tai-

120 Shupe, Bromley, and Oliver, Anti-Cult Movement in America, vii.
lored to give sectarian Christians a sense of direct involvement in a fight against some terrible, demonic force threatening the true faith and the moral order.

**A Desirable Shift in Terminology**

Introvigne and other Roman Catholic scholars prefer the designation *new religious movement*, rather than the currently pejorative and confusing label *cult*, to designate religious movements or churches (or whatever they might be called) that have come on the scene in the last couple of centuries. Tolbert has begun to adopt this new more neutral terminology. For example, in his “Preface to the 1996 Edition” of DCRO, Tolbert indicates that he hopes that his work will assist those who are “in need of informed opinion on cults and new religious movements” (p. v). Does this indicate that he might be willing to distinguish “cults” from new religious movements? Perhaps those are merely alternative designations. Be that as it may, he seems to be moving toward the terminology recommended by serious students of contemporary religion. This is a desirable move. But I am not sure just what impact a shift to “new religious movements” would have on his directory. Such a shift might put him out of business, since his market consists essentially of countercultists.

Tolbert has indicated to me that, even though he remains a devout Pentecostal, he is no longer personally involved in evangelizing. He is, instead, more interested in understanding what it is that others may believe about divine things. He is, therefore, contemplating listing his own agency—American Religions Center—among those who, like Introvigne, want to be known as employing a sociological approach to the study of new religious movements. In addition, for years Tolbert has been urging sectarian countercult agencies to clean up and tone down their rhetoric. He flatly rejects as simply preposterous the notion of widespread Satanic ritual abuse of children. He was therefore troubled to discover that Sandra and Jerald Tanner, of Utah Lighthouse Ministry—the state of the art in anti-Mormonism—have bought into such conspiracy nonsense as part of their recent efforts to embarrass the Church of Jesus Christ.121

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Tolbert has, as I have noted, refused to include in DCRO certain individuals who seem unusually immature, who are obvious liars, and so forth. But when the likes of Ed Decker, of *The God Makers* infamy, or Joyce McKinney, of unseemly tabloid fame in England, or Bob Larson, Bob Morey, Steve Van Nattan can still be included in DCRO, Tolbert’s standards for inclusion in his directory are not especially strict. If he were to raise his standards, many or perhaps most of the agencies currently listed in DCRO would disappear, and its usefulness as a scholarly tool would be severely compromised. Therefore, I do not believe that Tolbert should exclude anyone, even those who are arguably insane or criminal, from his directory. What we need is a full indication of what is out there in the countercult culture. The problem with the directory comes when Tolbert mixes the cranks in with those who may have more serious interests in new religious movements. But the strange world of sectarian countercultists is an important part of the anarchic reality of contemporary American Protestantism.

Of course, those brands of religiosity with roots in the Protestant Reformation do not want to see themselves as new religious movements, though from a somewhat broader perspective they

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122 Robert Morey operates Truth Seekers (aka The Research and Education Foundation) out of Newport, Pennsylvania. He claims to have had personal training from Walter Martin. He has published more than twenty-five books. He is anti-Catholic, anti-Adventist, anti-Jehovah’s Witness, anti-Freemasonry, anti-Jewish, anti-Islam, anti-Bahai, and so forth.

123 Steve Van Nattan describes Mormonism as “the Sewer of the Universe.” Morey boasts that he considers “Mormonism to be a damnable heresy from the toilet of hell. We have no mercy on the system and its leaders. BUT we have a genuine burden for those caught up in Mormonism.” He just wants to “try to keep you informed as to the old and new in Mormonism, no holds barred.” Well, what exactly is new? “ALL Mormon homes have pictures of the temple in Salt Lake and usually another from some other place they lived. Mormonism is based upon real estate and lust, NOT salvation by faith in Jesus Christ.” If Latter-day Saints have a picture of Jesus in their homes, it is “NOT a [picture of] a Jew—Rather, this mongrel counterfeit Jesus is a leather faced German Gringo from Utah. The artist gave him a worn out look of a 45 to 50 year old truck farmer with six nagging wives out back.” The picture about which Morey so zealously complains, Gary Novak points out, was painted by a Roman Catholic. Van Nattan’s remarks appeared on his web page on 30 July 1997, address: http://www.balaams-ass.com/journal/warnings/mormon.htm.
might be described in those terms. All the Protestant denominations were once new religious movements from the perspective of Roman Catholic or Orthodox communities. Tolbert is not entirely unaware of the polemical and partisan element in the quarrel over "cults." He has to grant, for example, that "some Roman Catholics regard Evangelicals as cultic and some [of those agencies listed] in the Evangelical section [of DCRO] likewise regard Roman Catholicism as a cult" (p. ix).\(^{124}\)

**Finding Some Light in the Scandal**

One finds in DCRO descriptions of groups and individuals involving three other approaches to so-called "cult" study, including Roman Catholic (section 2 [pp. 33-41 lists 9 agencies), behaviorist (section 3 [pp. 35-43] lists 126 agencies), and sociological (section 4 [pp. 44-46] lists 21 agencies) approaches. But the obvious fact is that only those listed as employing a sociological approach to the study of "cults," or what are now being called new religious movements, are engaged in anything approaching a genuine study of anything. Among those who do not employ an evangelical approach to so-called "cult research," only one agency listed as Roman Catholic targets Latter-day Saints,\(^{125}\) and only one agency listed as employing a behaviorist approach has

\(^{124}\) Matthew Roper's survey of anti-Mormon and other countercult ministries indicates that a large number of them are radically anti-Catholic. See Jackie Alnor, "Groups Battle over Catholic Outreach," *Christianity Today* (2 March 1998): 70-71, for some juicy details on the background and significance of the current and sometimes blatantly belligerent "battle" between Roman Catholics and evangelical countercultists. Alnor describes a meeting of some 500 presumably former Catholics at an Ex-Catholics for Christ (ECFC) conference held at the Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, California. At this convention "about three dozen demonstrators outside waved 'Catholics for Christ' signs and distributed 'Catholic Answers' tracts, which proclaim Roman Catholicism as Christ's one true church." Ibid., 70.

\(^{125}\) Karl Keating's Catholic Answers, operating out of San Diego, California, lists among his specialties going after Latter-day Saints (p. 34). This is unfortunate, since Keating has written a fine book responding to evangelical anti-Catholic propaganda, where some of the issues closely resemble those raised in evangelical anti-Mormon literature. See Keating, *Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The Attack on "Romanism" by "Bible Christians"* (San Francisco, Calif.: Ignatius, 1988).
the Latter-day Saints targeted. Since those familiar with sociological literature tend to think of themselves, rightly or wrongly, as more or less neutral observers and therefore not as partisans in squabbles between groups, none of those listed as employing a sociological approach explicitly targets the restored gospel.

It is noteworthy that Massimo Introvigne, who operates an agency known as the Society for the Study of New Religions (CESNUR)—his operation is funded by the Roman Catholic Church—is a recognized expert on matters Mormon. He appears to me to have a better command of anti-Mormon literature than any Latter-day Saint. The editors of DCRO allow individuals and agencies to determine the category in which they will be listed. Introvigne has placed CESNUR among those who employ a sociological approach to the study of new religious movements. The inclusion of CESNUR among those listed in DCRO as employing a sociological approach to research on cults, when it is both clearly Roman Catholic, given its funding, and also clearly interested in seeing anti-Mormonism as part of the proliferation of new religious movements, raises some interesting possibilities.

Why should not FARMS be listed in DCRO? It would not fit in the evangelical section. But it might fit elsewhere or even constitute its own section. Tolbert, who is now responsible for editing DCRO, has indicated to me that he is intrigued with this possibility. Could not FARMS be included in the next edition of DCRO in a section that might be called the “The Mormon Approach”? Such a section could include a notation that those employing this approach to new (and old) religious movements are interested in, among other things, examining the assumptions at work within, for example, the evangelical countercult movement, and that we include in our Latter-day Saint perspective judgments about the ideology and activities of anti-Mormons. I have adapted this brief description from the carefully crafted language used by Tolbert to describe the Roman Catholic approach to the study of new religious movements. Or FARMS might simply follow the lead of CESNUR and ask to be included in the sociological section of

126 Mark Dringman, who claims a behavioral approach, and who also describes himself as ex-Transcendental Meditation, seems eager to attack Latter-day Saints.
127 See especially Introvigne’s essay entitled “The Devil Makers.”
Be that as it may, FARMS could be advertised as interested in monitoring the activities of those we consider anti-Mormons. Oh, what delicious irony. But DCRO is just packed full of exactly this kind of ironic twisting and turning.

If my proposal seems farfetched, it should be noted that many and perhaps even most so-called evangelical countercult agencies target Roman Catholics. At least 21 individuals and agencies are explicitly listed in DCRO as anti-Roman Catholic. And a glance at the catalogs of other countercult agencies or at their newsletters or other literature indicates that much anti-Catholic sentiment is being expressed in the countercult movement. Of course, not all evangelicals see Roman Catholics as a dangerous “cult,” but certainly many hold exactly that opinion. And it turns out that Roman Catholics, with a measure of caution as well as sophistication, are concerned about Pentecostals, if they are to be included within the evangelical umbrella, as they continue to penetrate into lands previously dominated by Roman Catholicism. So at least some tension exists between evangelicals (and especially their Pentecostal allies) and Roman Catholics.

Evangelicals generally also demonstrate that they are not at all happy with much that is associated with traditional, mainline Protestant theology. They are, for example, often very hostile to

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128 The product catalog distributed by Cultivate Ministries, operating out of Colorado Springs, Colorado, advertises audio tapes going after Freemasonry, New Age, Christian Science, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and so forth. But their second largest inventory—49 tapes—attacks Roman Catholicism. Some 59 tapes attack Mormonism. They also offer to sell 7 books, most of which appear to attack Catholics. The 24 video tapes they offer for sale also attack Latter-day Saints and Roman Catholics in about equal numbers. Cultivate Ministries is, unfortunately, for some reason not listed in DCRO.

129 In addition, a glance at the catalogs provided to Matthew Roper by various evangelical countercult agencies demonstrates that, right along with materials advancing just about every eccentric conspiracy theory, evangelical countercult ministries are deeply involved in peddling anti-Catholic literature.

130 Some Fundamentalists attempt to avoid an outright condemnation of Roman Catholicism by imagining a Catholic version of evangelical religiosity. “A small percentage of Catholics,” according to James K. Walker (ex-LDS), “are doctrinally evangelical and others . . . have been influenced by the New Age.” See the entry on “Roman Catholicism” in the 1996 annual index to The Watchman Expositor, which is produced by the staff of the Watchman Fellowship, Inc., an evangelical countercult agency operating out of Arlington, Texas.
Calvinism. They sometimes picture John Calvin as an outright heretic. That is right—they often flatly reject some of the fundamental elements found in the teachings of Calvin (and Luther). Sometimes they do so without realizing what they are doing, since evangelicals do not seem to exhibit a genuine sense of the history of Christianity, including even the history of the Protestant Reformation. At times they specifically target Calvin, whom they consider to have been involved in advancing a number of the most damnable heresies. They dislike predestination and anything approaching a limited atonement, since they correctly insist that everyone could be saved if they made the proper choice. But when they insist on what they call “eternal security,” they come close to what they consider most noxious in Calvin’s theology.

If what I have reported to this point is fairly accurate, then one should not be surprised to find listed in the evangelical section of DCRO (pp. 2-32)—the main portion of the directory—virtually all the agencies and individuals currently engaged in spreading anti-Mormon propaganda. This may astonish some Latter-day Saints. What the editors of DCRO describe as the “cult-monitoring industry” (p. v) is primarily the work of the faction of Protestants who like to be known as evangelicals. With one remarkable exception, the mainline denominations are not generally or systematically involved in spreading anti-Mormon propaganda.\(^{131}\) Nor is anti-Mormonism, with one or two exceptions, the work of Roman Catholics.\(^{132}\) This may be confusing to Latter-day Saints,

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\(^{131}\) The most striking exception is the Interfaith Witness Division of the North American Mission Board (until recently the Home Mission Board) of the Southern Baptist Convention.

since they may assume that Catholicism should be a hotbed of virulent anti-Mormonism.

Some Supplementary Distinctions

In addition to distinguishing between secular and sectarian anti-Mormonism, Introvigne also distinguishes a rational from a postrational brand of evangelical opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ. The somewhat more rational opposition argues that Latter-day Saints are ingenuous or highly gullible, and have therefore gotten themselves involved in a “cult” founded by a fellow who was deeply involved in fraudulent activities. This strand of anti-Mormonism then attempts to persuade the Saints that they are trapped in a movement whose true history they ignore. They attempt, for example, to convince Latter-day Saints that Joseph Smith was involved in magic and superstition and that the Book of Mormon was a product of conscious fraud.

On the other hand, the much less rational and hence postrational sectarian anti-Mormons see dark demonic forces, Satan, or the occult as the explanation for both the origin and persistence of the Church of Jesus Christ. This faction of religious countercult anti-Mormonism has flourished as an aftermath of the so-called burgeoning spiritual warfare movement of the 1970s and 1980s. For those involved in or influenced by spiritual warfare ideology, Satan and the occult provide the proximate, rather than the ultimate, explanation for virtually everything going on in the world that is troublesome to true believers. To see exactly how this model has caught on among the more lunatic fringe of anti-Mormonism, one only has to note that Jerald Tanner at one point was thought by a number of his anti-Mormon associates to be in need of an exorcist because he had, so it was said, obviously been deluded by Satan and had actually become a Mormon agent, but without being aware of what had happened. The Tanners were accused by some of their former associates of having become involved in distributing disinformation and hence preventing Christians from recognizing both the Satanic roots and demonic qualities of Mormonism.

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134 Ibid., 161–68.
Franchising Anti-Mormon Cult Activity

One of the striking lessons to be learned from glancing at DCRO is that several preacher-entrepreneurs have made considerable efforts to grant franchises to others in an effort to push their ideology and sell their products. The endeavors closely associated with Ed Decker illustrate my point. By franchising I have in mind the authorization by a parent company granted to individuals or groups to sell its goods or services in a particular way. And that appears to have been the sales strategy employed by Ed Decker.

A glance at DCRO reveals a number of groups still in existence, some of which operate outside the United States, calling themselves Saints Alive in Jesus or Ex-Mormons for Jesus (or some version of these names). According to Tolbert and Pement they were once incorporated. But this effort at what may have been control of merchandising and presumably also control of ideology seems to have failed and was eventually discontinued, though some of the groups seem to have retained the early name and mission. There has been a gradual and steady decline in the number of groups using both these earlier franchise names since 1991.

What is not clear is what Ed Decker or others who have turned to the model of corporate franchising had in mind when they attempted to clone their own countercult activities. Was this merely a way of having salespersons spread around the world? Or did the franchising of countercult agencies amount to an effort to found a kind of religious movement or "cult," with the master preacher—say, someone like Ed Decker—holding tightly to the reigns? More research needs to be undertaken to determine what produced the many dozens of agencies calling themselves, often without any justification, either Saints Alive or Ex-Mormons.

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136 It is clear that many of those who spread anti-Mormon propaganda under the guise of being Ex-Mormons or Saints Alive were nothing of the kind. They were instead either preachers—with or without regular congregations and looking for a following—or else anxious laymen who had been recruited by being frightened into defending what they perhaps sincerely believed is orthodox Christianity from the evils of what they like to call the "Mormon church."
By describing in subtle ways the bulk of religiously motivated (that is, sectarian) anti-Mormonism as consisting of remarkably cultlike countercult individuals and organizations, Introvigne has perhaps opened up promising avenues for further research, if anyone can ever stand sorting through what is a dreadful literature. He may have also revealed something of his own Roman Catholic stance toward the entire anticult movement. Be that as it may, my hunch is that Latter-day Saints may very well come to agree with those like Introvigne who see signs that the countercult movement gives the appearance of a number of squabbling factions that look very much like the "cults" they claim to loathe.

Introvigne also invokes the further distinction among religiously oriented anti-Mormon individuals and agencies. We may be able to distinguish, he argues, if I have read him correctly, between a client "cult"—whose preachers promulgate and publish their views as a vehicle for organizing their followers, where services are provided, sometimes even for a fee, and where serious efforts are made from time to time to organize followers into life-orienting groups—and audience "cults" like the Tanners' Utah Lighthouse Ministry. Anti-Mormon preachers such as Ed Decker, with his Saints Alive organizations, seem to come close to forming what might be called a client-cult out of their disciples. Anti-Mormon luminaries like the Tanners merely want an audience for their parade of propaganda. They make no effort to gather those they influence into much of anything. They seemingly only desire to see those they influence adopt something like their own bland evangelicalism. In addition, Jerald Tanner, who is shy and reclusive, lacks the ability to function as a preacher.

If I am more or less right about what distinguishes the efforts of someone like Ed Decker, who seems bent on drawing followers into his own countercult, and the Tanners, who appear eager to warn of the dangers of Mormonism and persuade people to reject the gospel of Jesus Christ, then we may have an explanation for what Introvigne sees as the fundamental differences between what he describes as the somewhat more and much less rational wings of sectarian anti-Mormonism, and of the countercult movement generally. They differ in the way they try to explain why Mormons are not Christian. Those like Ed Decker see Mormonism as the work of Satan, while people like the Tanners find themselves
somewhat embarrassed by the lurid and absurd details that preachers like Ed Decker, James Spencer, and Bill Schnoebelen parade to flesh out this kind of explanation. The Tanners, and others like them, tend to reject at least some if not all of the more extreme claims of evangelical preachers like Decker.\footnote{See Introvigne, “The Devil Makers,” 158–69, for an interesting account of the literature produced by these fellows and the controversy it engendered among the somewhat less irrational elements of evangelical anti-Mormonism.}

If I am right that people like the Tanners have little interest in controlling the religious thinking of their audience, other than to warn them to leave or avoid what they consider the Mormon fraud—they rarely say much about their own convictions, while people like Decker seem to me to be eager to control the entire understanding of their clients and hence are in the business of creating their own little parachurches—then we may have an explanation for the hostilities that break out between these two factions of countercultists.

It seems that from the perspective of the Tanners, what Ed Decker has done in his lurid, unseemly, and ridiculous films is counterproductive—it makes the anti-Mormon movement appear to be merely another instance of spooky-kooky nonsense. What the Tanners pride themselves on is accurately reporting on what they consider inconsistencies and inaccuracies in the way the Saints tell their own story, and they love to trot out any gossip they feel will help their partisan cause. But they have limits; they sense that some things may not sell and they try to avoid them. And hence they reject the bizarre stuff produced by Walter Martin, Ed Decker, and their associates and followers. But they are not entirely averse to conspiracy theories. And hence they have uncritically accepted tales about Satanic ritual child abuse allegedly going on in the Mormon community.

But Decker, just like Walter Martin, above all else seems to need followers or disciples whose understanding of the world he can dominate with his lurid tales. He has clearly attempted to become a cult leader with a devoted following. And in order to accomplish that end he has had to borrow and invent whatever he can to control his clients as he wows uninformed audiences made up in part of people prepared to be enthralled with insider tales of
grand conspiracies that run or are at work in the world. Decker's conspiracy nonsense links Satan, Freemasonry, and Mormonism. And, in addition, Decker's kind of audiences, much like those once enthralled by tales of banker's conspiracies that run the world, insist on ever more lurid details of supposed conspiracy, manipulation, and demonic control. Decker has been eager to gratify such debased desires, whatever his own private opinions.

The Tanners, as I have suggested, are not entirely opposed to adopting conspiracy theories or at least gossiping about such matters. But unlike a large element in the evangelical countercult world, they have not been at all inclined to focus their attention on a Communist or banker's conspiracy. Instead, the Tanners like to see merely silly, minor little conspiracies involving Latter-day Saints presumably trying to spy on anti-Mormons, or trying to hide something in the Mormon past. But recently something came down the pike that was just too good for the Tanners to let pass by without jumping into the fray. They now subscribe to the notion of a massive Satanic conspiracy to abuse children and that vast numbers of Latter-day Saints at virtually all levels have had a hand in such things.

This has very much troubled Keith Tolbert, who has come more and more to distrust much of the evangelical countercult

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138 George and Rita Williams, Cephas Ministry Inc., P.O. Box 2353, Zephyrhills, FL 33539-2353, offer an annual edition of a useful catalog of books, videos, audio tapes, and pamphlets (tracts) on seventeen subjects, including Mormonism, Catholicism, New Age, Evolution, and others, all of which are indexed by subject matter and by the countercult ministry that sells these materials. Under "End-time—Church" one finds an amazing collection of strange books and tracts being offered for sale, including Gary H. Kah, *En Route to Global Occupation* (Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1992), wherein "a government liaison [sic] exposes the secret agenda for world unification"; William T. Still, *New World Order: The Ancient Plan of Secret Societies* (Lafayette, La.: Huntington House, 1990), which exposes "the Ancient Plan of Secret Societies ... to bring all nations under one world government, [and] the biblical rule of the Antichrist." These are merely samples of the truly bizarre materials currently being made available by the evangelical countercult industry. I urge the bemused reader to request a catalog from Cephas Ministry, which introduces the specialties (and addresses) of other countercult agencies.

movement and who is especially critical of claims of massive Satanic child abuse going on in the United States. Tolbert has indicated to me that he is deeply disappointed in the Tanners for buying into what he considers nonsense. When I asked him about the bizarre stuff spouted by the likes of Ed Decker and the ugly fight between the somewhat more and much less rational wings of the countercult movement, as illustrated by the Tanners and the late Wally Tope slugging it out in the polemical gutter with Ed Decker over his bizarre and obviously false tales of being poisoned while on a tour of the UK by agents of the "Mormon church," Tolbert indicated that he had tried to tell both sides to cut it out. But I doubt very much that his advice did much to reduce the animosity between the Tanners and Ed Decker.

The Role of Apostates

One study concluded that "leaders of anti-cult organizations and former members" have been leading sources—the "two major sources" for the sensational allegations against those groups that countercult agencies target. These authors also claimed that "apostate accounts have been one of the most potent weapons in anti-cult campaigns throughout history." That is certainly true in the case of Latter-day Saints. The descriptions found in DCRO identify many of the anti-Mormons as "ex-LDS." An examination of what these people write indicates that many and perhaps most of them were Latter-day Saints only marginally or in name only. And some may simply not be telling the full story of their involvement with the Church of Jesus Christ.

Can Preachers Be Anti-Mormon?

One nagging issue remains: should one even refer to the anti-Mormonism of the contemporary countercult culture? Some preachers claim that they love what they describe as the Mormon people, that is, Latter-day Saints, and only want to see them liberated from false, heretical, even demonic teachings and practices they attribute to the Church of Jesus Christ.

140 Shupe, Bromley, and Oliver, Anti-Cult Movement in America, 6-7.
Some anti-Mormon preachers thus now are beginning to see a propaganda advantage to insisting that they are not anti-Mormon, even though they regularly engage in wanton attacks on the Church of Jesus Christ. For example, Kurt Van Gorden, a rather pugnacious (and also mendacious) sectarian opponent of the church,\textsuperscript{141} vehemently denies that he is anti-Mormon.\textsuperscript{142} Instead, this fellow insists that, since he really loves Latter-day Saints and only attacks their beliefs and practices in order to turn them into orthodox, biblical, trinitarian Christians, it is improper to label him anti-Mormon. From his perspective, the label \textit{anti-Mormon} should only be employed to identify those who recommend or are actually involved in violence against Latter-day Saints. He insists on this narrowing of the meaning of anti-Mormon. He seems to realize that to be labeled an anti-Mormon reduces his potential impact on thoughtful, fair-minded evangelicals and others who may find something unseemly in their own pastors bashing the sincere faith of others, not to mention his potential impact on Latter-day Saints who have had some experience with fanatic anti-Mormon preachers.

Van Gorden also insists that his understanding of what constitutes an anti-Mormon is derived from the initial use of that label, which he traces to the party bent on harming the Saints when they were located in Nauvoo. The mistaken assumption seems to be that the first use of a word fixes its meaning for all time and hence regulates its future use. His assumption is silly.


\textsuperscript{142} In November 1996 \textit{Christianity Today} published a news item about a scuffle with security that Kurt Van Gorden ran into at the Utah State Fair, where he operated booths for his Jude 3 Mission and distributed anti-Mormon literature. Van Gorden complained that the headline in \textit{Christianity Today} was “in error,” since “the term \textit{anti-Mormon} originated in the 1840s as a pejorative hate-term for the mobs in Missouri and Illinois who persecuted Latter-day Saints and shot Joseph Smith.” In addition, he claimed that “the term means ‘against the people,’ which is the opposite of our gospel message.” Kurt Van Gorden, “Missionaries not ‘Anti-Mormons,’” \textit{Christianity Today} 41/1 (January 1997): 15.
Would Van Gorden, I wonder, grant that his highly pejorative, partisan use of the initially neutral term *cult*, which originally identified the practices or worship of any community, is illegitimate because it departs from its first use? Of course not. I am confident that he would justify his political use of word *cult* on the grounds that words mean different things to different people and these meanings obviously can and often do change radically over time.

An English dictionary should have indicated to Van Gorden that *anti* is a prefix that modifies a word to signify “against, opposite, contrary, or in place of.” Nothing in the prefix *anti* requires that one who is publicly opposed to the Church of Jesus Christ intend or recommend physical harm or the death of Latter-day Saints, or the destruction of their property, merely that they are in some evident way openly and aggressively opposed to Latter-day Saint teachings and practices.

But even if we assume that the first use of a word fixes forever its future meaning and use—an absurd claim, and one that Van Gorden simply cannot consistently maintain—it turns out that he is simply wrong. The first use of the adjective *anti-Mormon* is found in a 22-page pamphlet entitled *Anti-Mormon Almanac, for 1842*, where the label clearly identifies the kind of stuff found in E. D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unvailed*, first published in 1834. And Howe’s book is virtually the mother of most subsequent anti-Mormon literature. Be that as it may, nothing in this *Anti-Mormon Almanac* refers to those bent on killing the Saints or destroying their property, and nothing in it overtly recommends such behavior. The *Anti-Mormon Almanac* is not mobbing the Saints, merely opposing them and their faith. The label *anti-Mormon* thus has an older and much broader meaning than Van Gorden and his asso-

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143 *Anti-Mormon Almanac, for 1842* (New York: Health Book Store, 120 Fulton Street, [1841]). The subtitle reads as follows: Containing, besides the usual astronomical calculations a variety of interesting and important facts, showing the treasonable tendency, and the wicked imposture of that great delusion, advocated by a sect, lately risen up in the United States, calling themselves Mormons, or Latter Day Saints; with quotations from their writings and from public document no. 189, published by order of Congress, February 15, 1841, showing that Mormonism authorizes the crimes of theft, robbery, high treason, and murder; together with the number of the sect, their views, character of their leaders &c., &c.
ciates now claim. And this can be seen by consulting what Latter-day Saints consider anti-Mormon literature, where one can find the adjective *anti-Mormon* used to describe various people, tracts, tabloids, books, pamphlets, arguments and so forth, and where it does not necessarily identify mobbing.

It is valid for Latter-day Saints to characterize as anti-Mormon both the ministries and the literature produced and distributed by individuals and agencies who actively oppose Latter-day Saint beliefs and practices. If Van Gorden and his associates wish not to be known as anti-Mormon, if they have real sympathy for Latter-day Saints, then I suggest that they cease contesting the Church of Jesus Christ and turn their attention elsewhere. But for what are essentially political reasons, Van Gorden and his associates do not wish to be known for their anti-Mormonism. They imagine that they just love the Mormons and by attacking the faith of Latter-day Saints they are manifesting this love. Alan Gomes recently opined that if one of his colleagues, James White, "truly were 'anti-Mormon' he would let them perish in their error." Since White claims to love the Mormon people, though he clearly detests their beliefs, Gomes concludes that "Prof. White is no 'anti-Mormon.' He has been truly dialoging with Mormons from all walks of life for over fifteen years, seeking to win them to the God of the Bible." Such is the terminological legerdemain currently fashionable among wily sectarian critics of the Church of Jesus Christ.

Anti-Mormons sometimes insist that they "are not 'attacking' good Mormon people," thus following Hugh Nibley's Rule 5

144 See, for example, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* 5th ed. (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1987), 43, 44, 55, 62, 80, 82, 84, 96-A, 96-E, 104, 154, 155, 224. Perhaps Van Gorden should take up his complaint about the use of the word *anti-Mormon* with the likes of Sandra Tanner.

145 Alan W. Gomes, "Foreword" to James R. White's *Is the Mormon My Brother?* 12.

146 Ibid.

of "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book: those embarking on a career in anti-Mormonism ought to "proclaim [their] love for the Mormon people" before insisting that no mercy should be shown such an anti-Christian faith." Hence anti-Mormons insist that "the Mormon 'gospel'" is "black and corrupt," and that Latter-day Saint "claims are spurious and empty," "a gigantic hoax," "a gigantic fraud," a "deliberate attempt to deceive," and so forth. It is thus easy for demagogues like Walter Martin to slip from moaning about "The Maze of Mormonism" into murmuring about the "menace of Mormonism" or the "Mormon menace." Hence evangelicals must be "awake to the dangers before [them]: the cultist wolf is at the door of the sheepfold." All must "realize the danger" presented by the "alarming spread and popularity of the Mormon religion." Why?

The reason, again according to Walter Martin, is that "Mormonism constitutes an immense threat to the Church of Jesus Christ of our era." "Of all the major cults ... in America," according to Martin, "none is more subtle or dangerous to the unwar soul than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." Hence, according to Martin, steps must be taken,

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1978), or one of his talks, which also carried the same title. Transcript in Special Collections, HBLL, at Brigham Young University (MSS 957, no date).


150 Ibid., 49.

151 Ibid., 58.

152 Ibid., 61.

153 Ibid., 59.

154 Ibid., 63.

155 Ibid., 64.

156 Ibid., 64.

157 Ibid., 63.

158 Ibid., 64.

159 Ibid., 50.

159 Ibid., 49. These statements might be read as arguing that the Church of Jesus Christ is an "immense threat" to the Church of Jesus Christ. Of course, what Martin was trying to say is that he saw the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as a threat to evangelicals in general and Baptists in particular.
which include "constant surveillance" of those "Mormons." And an "up-to-date and factual literature" attacking the Church of Jesus Christ must be provided, with Walter Martin, of course, busy selling this literature. Such a literature presumably would constitute a part of the "strong countermeasures" that are needed against the "threat of Mormonism."

If Walter Martin, that veritable maestro and mentor of anti-Mormonism, could engage in such demagoguery, how have those who have followed in his footsteps misbehaved? The highly recommended Robert Morey opines that Mormonism is "a damnable heresy from the toilet of hell"; it is "the Sewer of the Universe." Robert McKay, who was until June of 1997 an employee of Utah Missions, Inc., of Marlow, Oklahoma, boasted that he had "read where Joseph Smith called all Christian churches wrong, all Christian doctrine an abomination, and all Christians corrupt." Mr. McKay boasts that he has "a difficult time not saying that Mormonism hates Christianity." And, warming to his subject, he then concludes that "Mormons, as a group, hate Christianity."

Latter-day Saints, from Mr. McKay's perspective, give no "allowance for sincere error or difference of opinion, and this view is part and parcel of the thinking of the average Mormon." McKay was furious because, when he passed out tracts attacking the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints at the open house held prior to the dedication of the temple north of

160 Ibid., 64.
161 Ibid., 63.
162 Ibid., 63, 50.
163 See note 123, above, for source.
164 Robert McKay, "Mormonism Hates Christianity," The Evangel 44/4 (July/August 1997): 1. Joseph Smith actually indicated that "the Personage who addressed [him] said that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight; that those professors [of the creeds] were all corrupt; that: 'they draw near to me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me, they teach for doctrines the commandments of men, having a form of godliness, but they deny the power thereof,'" Joseph Smith—History 1:19.
166 Ibid.
San Diego, he and his associates, who were labeled "so-called 'anti-Mormons,'" were "basically described as liars, when it comes to history, but nothing is given to show that such is actually the case."\textsuperscript{168} Of course, Latter-day Saints gathering to visit a new temple were not willing to engage in impromptu arguments with Mr. McKay and his fellow anti-Mormons over the content of some tract they were handing out. Hence, Mr. McKay concluded that giving

the "anti-Mormon" label to critics of the LDS church \textit{[sic]} is not designed to accurately describe actions or beliefs or motivations, but to set those thus pejoratively labeled in a religious ghetto, permanently barred from meaningful communication or even from consideration as sincere human beings who just may have a point.\textsuperscript{169}

Mr. McKay seems to have craved confrontations with Latter-day Saints right then and there over the content of the tract he was distributing. And when the Saints would not indulge his appetite for such unseemly controversy, he imagined that they hate Christianity. Mr. McKay insists on being taken seriously by Latter-day Saints and is annoyed when he and his literature is ignored. It seems that many and perhaps most of those, like Mr. McKay, who turn their hostility toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into a profession are eccentric persons—cranks—whose bizarre actions and literature are both amusing and contemptible.

**A Moderate Anti-Mormonism?**

But cannot at least \textit{some} responsible anti-Mormons be found? Dennis A. Wright, currently director of Utah Missions, Inc., who has recently replaced Michael H. Reynolds and Robert McKay, claims "that there are some so-called 'anti-Mormons' who have earned doctorates from accredited institutions, who are making a serious effort to cut the explosive rhetoric and engage in honest dialogue with LDS people."\textsuperscript{170} Reverend Wright assures me that he intends to be one of these new moderates among evangelical

\textsuperscript{168} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{170} E-mail from Dennis Wright to Midgley, dated 21 March 1998.
critics of the church, and that he has no intention of following the course taken by Reynolds and McKay, his predecessors at Utah Missions, Inc.\textsuperscript{171} Of course, I applaud such a resolve by Reverend Wright and I also hope to see improvements in the quality of the literature both written and distributed by Utah Missions, Inc.\textsuperscript{172}

But Reverend Wright should not underestimate the difficulties he may face in attempting to sell a moderate, responsible literature on the Latter-day Saints to those who have long been fed a diet of bias, bigotry, and bombast. I suspect that Baptists who have been fed such a diet will find it easier to retain their opinions than listen to a voice of moderation. There might be a kind of Gresham’s Law (bad money drives out good money) operating in the counter-cult culture—the worst driving out the less irresponsible literature.

This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the affluent, powerful, and aggressive Southern Baptist Convention has for years been in the business of sponsoring attacks on the Church of Jesus Christ. Southern Baptists have not, as Latter-day Saints might assume, just recently entered the anti-Mormon bigotry business as they prepare for what they describe as their “blitz campaign” to

\textsuperscript{171} E-mail from Dennis Wright to Midgley, dated 25 March 1998. Rev. Wright adds that “we are in a new era here at Utah Missions and my philosophy is far different” from Reynolds and McKay. Rev. Wright also indicates that Reynolds was fired from UMI “for cause.” E-mail from Dennis Wright to Michael H. Reynolds, dated 10 March 1998, copies sent to both Daniel Peterson and me by Dennis Wright.

\textsuperscript{172} Utah Missions, Inc., was founded by John L. Smith, a Baptist preacher, in Utah in 1954, though he later moved his ministry to Oklahoma. Much like Sandra and Jerald Tanner and their Utah Lighthouse Ministry, Reverend Smith got into the anti-Mormon business prior to Walter Martin’s call for others to join him in attacking so-called “cults.” Unlike many anti-Mormon agencies, both ULM and UMI focus their attention exclusively on the Church of Jesus Christ. The Reverend Smith seems to have been heavily influenced by Walter Martin. The Tanners may have had a somewhat less cordial relationship with Martin. Why? I can cite at least two reasons. First, the Tanners rejected Walter Martin’s reliance on the Spalding theory to explain the authorship of the Book of Mormon. Second, when the Tanners got into an ugly fight with Ed Decker over the truthfulness of his claim that he had been poisoned by Mormon agents while on a tour of Great Britain, Martin seems to have supported Decker. See Decker’s remarks in his Saints Alive in Jesus (June/July 1989): 1. The Tanners do not sell Martin’s books, nor does Martin’s Christian Research Institute sell anything written by the Tanners.
evangelize "Mormons" in conjunction with their annual convention in Salt Lake City on 9–11 June 1998. Some public attention has been drawn to SBC plans to introduce the presumably heathen Saints to the true interpretation of the Bible before, during, and after their huge national convention.173

The fact is that the Southern Baptist Convention has for years trained ministers and missionaries—"witness associates"—to attack those they refer to as "Mormons" on the ground, among other inane charges, that members of the Church of Jesus Christ are not what they consider "Christians." Leaders of portions of the Southern Baptist Convention have invested time and wealth into officially fashioning and offering courses of instruction intended to indoctrinate those who participate with what amount to half-truths, distortions, and lurid gossip about Latter-day Saints and their beliefs. The SBC has then granted credentials presumably warranting the qualifications of those attending these instruction sessions to attack the Church of Jesus Christ.

As part of an instruction that is clearly intended to make Southern Baptist preachers (aka "Interfaith Witness Associates") into formidable experts on Mormon things, and hence to bring Jesus, as they boast, even the real Jesus of the Bible, to the attention of the Saints, leaders of the Interfaith Witness Department of the Southern Baptist Convention have produced a manual of instruction—118 pages in all—entitled Light on the Latter-day Saints.174 This was written by Dr. Gary Leazer, who in 1991 was the director of the Interfaith Witness Division of the Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention175 (since June of 1997 known as the North American Mission Board) and by Tal Davis, then and now associate director of the Interfaith Witness Division. I will illustrate the difficulties in Light on the Latter-day Saints by drawing attention to just two of many hundreds of possible items that beg for correction, objection, or derision.

173 As discussed on the NAMB website.
175 Gary Leazer now operates the Center for Interfaith Studies (Stone Mountain, Georgia), an evangelical countercult agency, according to Tolbert (see p. 10).
Tal Davis has provided a “Selected Bibliography on Latter-day Saints (Mormons).” I was worried, until I noticed a disclaimer warning his readers that the books he lists “do not necessarily reflect the positions of the Interfaith Witness Division or the Home Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention,” since the first book listed is Fawn M. Brodie’s notorious account of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon. Brodie was an atheist who looked for naturalistic explanations of all religious truth claims. In addition, anti-Mormons ought to sense that she was even more critical of their kind of religious ideology than she was of the faith of her “Mormon” family. And anti-Mormons who want to use Brodie’s book as a stick with which to beat the church ought to recognize that her book on Joseph Smith, much like her book on Jefferson, has been heavily criticized by competent historians outside the church.

It is, perhaps, understandable why Brodie’s book would be listed by Tal Davis. But the presence of a number of the other tomes he lists indicates that he has no sense of what constitutes competent writing on the Church of Jesus Christ. Dr. Davis suggests that his Baptist associates read something written by Robert Morey, whose bombast we have already encountered. Dr. Davis also recommends an inaccurate, sensationalized account of the Mark Hofmann affair written by a journalist. And he likes James R. Spencer’s work. Spencer, an associate of Ed Decker, as we have seen, just loves lurid speculation about the supposedly demonic architecture of LDS temples. And, of course,

176 Leaser and Davis, Light on the Latter-day Saints, 76–78.
177 Ibid., 78.
179 Robert A. Morey, How to Witness to a Mormon (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1983).
Davis recommends Walter Martin’s opining about the Church of Jesus Christ.182

Davis has thus provided a clear indication of where he and Leazer have borrowed the materials with which they attack the Church of Jesus Christ. Drawing on such questionable literature, is it not likely that _Light on the Latter-day Saints_ will be filled with darkness? To see that this is exactly the case, one need only glance at one rather typical example of distortion and falsehood presented by Leazer and Davis as the proper way to present to Latter-day Saints “the plan of salvation.”183 Those being turned into expert “Witness Associates” on Mormon things are urged to stress to the Latter-day Saints, who presumably would otherwise never suspect, “that salvation comes to the humble, not the self-righteous.”184 What is unsaid, of course, is that such stress is necessary precisely because Latter-day Saints obviously think that one can be arrogant and self-righteous when approaching God.

What follows this bit of advice are five points that Baptists should present to Latter-day Saints. These are numbered and followed by proof-tests.

1. Leazer and Davis assume Latter-day Saints have never considered the possibility that they are involved in sin. Hence “the Mormon,” they insist, “must realize that he is a sinner.”

2. And Leazer and Davis insist that the Saints see no need for divine mercy, since “the Mormon must realize that he cannot save himself.” The fact is that the Saints have never entertained the notion that they can somehow save themselves. From death? From sin? In both instances Latter-day Saints believe that they must rely on the merits and mercy of the Holy Messiah, through whom redemption from sin and death comes. Nor is such a notion that humans can somehow save themselves taught in the scriptures. What Latter-day Saints reject and what is not found in the Bible is the fatuous formula insisting on salvation by grace alone.185 The truth is that we all must constantly repent of our sins and strive to

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182 Walter R. Martin, _The Kingdom of the Cults_, rev. ed. (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1985); and also Martin’s _The Maze of Mormonism._
183 Leazer and Davis, _Light on the Latter-day Saints_, 90.
184 Ibid.
185 This formula is the invention of uninspired preachers busy wrestling the scriptures, and nothing more can be said about the issue.
keep the commandments of God as best we can and thus endure to the end. Deeds, the fruit of repentance, are necessary, though they are never sufficient, for redemption from sin. But it seems that Leazer and Davis describe the Saints as dangerous heathens because they picture us wrongly as believing that we somehow save ourselves. The Saints insist that all mankind must rely on the merits and mercy of the Holy One of Israel for such redemption from sin.

3. Leazer and Davis, ignoring Latter-day Saint sacramental language, hymns, scripture, and inspired and prophetic utterances, still insist that “the Mormon must realize that he will perish without Christ.”

4. But, on the positive side, Leazer and Davis insist that “the Mormon must realize that he can be saved now.” Here we see signs of the currently fashionable sectarian ideology creeping into the discussion. The Saints, Leazer and Davis insist, can be “saved now” by accepting Jesus as their personal savior, or by being regenerated or “born again,” which from their perspective happens once and for all the instant one confesses Jesus. And one makes that confession by answering an “altar call,” or by saying a prayer. At that moment and from then on, if one is sincere, then one is saved, having somehow merited by that one act what is sometimes called “eternal security.” For those who imagine that they have “eternal security,” nothing that they subsequently do, no matter how awful, can call into question their salvation; they simply cannot fall from grace. This is the core of the message that Baptists want the Saints to accept. But what they preach is cheap grace—one can have one’s seat locked up in heaven right now merely by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior.

5. But not quite. Why not? “The Mormon,” according to our Baptist guides, “must realize he must be a consistent, faithful Christian after his conversion.” But why, if they can be saved now? Do not our Baptist brothers claim that the blood of Jesus covers all the sins of the one who confesses that Jesus is Lord and Savior? Well, yes. But one still ought to show good works after conversion. So it turns out that Baptists are not entirely antinomian—they sense that obedience to the commandments has a place. And presumably Latter-day Saints do not sense that they ought to be striving to keep the commandments, enduring to the
end, striving to live as much as possible within the moral restraints set by God. But notice that earlier Leazer and Davis were insisting that Latter-day Saints believe that they can save themselves by their works, that is, merely by keeping the commandments, and hence entirely apart from the atoning sacrifice for sin made by Jesus of Nazareth. Suddenly it is Baptists who must stress the necessity of a “consistent, fruitful” life that must follow faith in Jesus Christ. Presumably the Saints, according to Leazer and Davis, have never entertained the notion that they must manifest a broken heart and contrite spirit—the fruit of repentance—as their offering to God for the sacrifice of the Messiah on their behalf.

This is just a very small sample of the nonsense found in the materials used to train Baptist “Witness Associates” for their ministry to “Mormons.” Perhaps the Southern Baptist Convention was following this inaccurate literature in its training sessions in 1991, but has since become more responsible in the way it views the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. But that does not seem to be the case. In a pamphlet entitled The Mormon Puzzle: Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, Michael H. Reynolds included the seriously flawed Light on the Latter-day Saints among his suggested readings, along with other sometimes even more objectionable books and pamphlets.186

What I find inexplicable is that the Southern Baptist Convention could call upon the likes of Michael Reynolds and Robert McKay to provide critical commentary on the Church of Jesus Christ at precisely the same time it was unloading Utah Missions, Inc., and when John L. Smith, its founder, was sending these fellows packing and turning his operation over to Dennis A. Wright, who clearly sees Reynolds and McKay as disreputable.

It turns out that Reverend Wright’s fond hope that honest, responsible, knowledgeable anti-Mormons may come on the scene and eventually replace the scandal generated by a small army of cranks, opportunists, and charlatans, unfortunately may not be on

the horizon, especially within the Southern Baptist Convention, which seems to constitute the major market for the product of the countercult industry.

When examining Walter Martin’s anti-Mormon writings, as well as the writings of his numerous countercult epigone, I have been reminded of some lines I used in 1966 to describe my reaction to the theology of Paul Tillich:187

It moves us not.—Great God! I’d rather be
A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn.188

Tillich, the eminent German Protestant theologian, managed after World War II to become a cultural icon in the United States with his then fashionable philosophically grounded theology. His ideology was an ultimate expression of where one strand of apostasy has led Christians as they became enthralled with half-understood pagan philosophy. But unlike Tillich, whose theology was essentially an atheist expression of apostate Christianity, the new evangelicalisms, and especially the countercult element lurking under that umbrella, are heavily involved in bombast, bigotry, and bibliolatry. And their nostrums end up offering a cheap grace in which the Bible is reduced to a few verses plucked out of context from two or three of the Apostle Paul’s letters, with the rest of Paul’s writings, as well as those of James (perhaps the brother of Jesus) and virtually the entire New Testament—including the Gospels themselves—ignored or reduced to proof-texts and employed as an excuse for keeping those hungry for the Word of God from enjoying the blessings that flow from the fulness of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Sectarian anti-Mormons, whether or not they care to be known as such, seem to me to be playing a role in building the kingdom of God. But I doubt that they realize the kind of role they are playing. Their opposition to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints helps maintain boundaries between the Saints and gentile religiosity. And the Saints may need to be reminded that they are not part of some religious ideology or movement being advanced either within or by one or more of the numerous sects.

factions, or denominations that constitute the Protestant world. Anti-Mormons also need to realize that Latter-day Saints have no desire whatsoever to be seen, and certainly do not see themselves, as Protestant in any sense. Instead, the Saints have always maintained that they are *sui generis* Christians.