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A Latter-day Saint Perspective on Biblical Inerrancy

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Robert L. Millet

Sufficiency

The family of young Joseph Smith loved the Bible, and they read it regularly. It was, in fact, through pondering upon a biblical passage that Joseph began his quest to know the will of the Almighty. Most of his sermons, writings, and letters are laced with quotations or summaries of biblical passages and precepts from both the Old and New Testaments. Joseph once remarked that one can “see God’s own handwriting in the sacred volume; and he who reads it oftenest will like it best.”¹ He believed the Bible represented God’s word to humanity, and he gloried in the truths and timeless lessons it contained.

As to the Bible’s sufficiency, to state that the Bible is the final word of God—more specifically, the final written word of God—is to claim more for the Bible than it claims for itself. We are nowhere given to understand after the ascension of Jesus and the ministry and writings of first-century Apostles that revelations from Deity, which could eventually take the form of scripture and thus be added to the canon, would cease. Thus Latter-day Saints would disagree with the following excerpt from the 1978 Chicago Statement on Inerrancy: “The New Testament canon is . . . now closed, inasmuch as no new apostolic witness to the historical Christ can now be borne. No new revelation (as distinct from Spirit-given understanding of existing revelation) will be given until Christ comes again.”²

After speaking of how James 1:5–6 had made such a deep impression on his soul, Joseph wrote, “I reflected on it again and again, knowing that if any person needed wisdom from God, I did . . . for the teachers of religion of the different sects understood the same passages of scripture so differently as to destroy all confidence in settling the question by an appeal to the Bible” (Joseph Smith—History 1:12). Years later he stated,

From what we can draw from the Scriptures relative to the teaching of heaven, we are induced to think that much instruction has been given to man since the beginning which we do not possess now. This may not agree with the opinions of some of our friends who are bold to say that we have everything written in the Bible which God ever spoke to man since the world began, and that if He had ever said anything more we should certainly have received it. . . . We have what we have, and the Bible contains what it does contain: but to say that God never said anything more to man than is there recorded, would be saying at once that we have at last received a revelation: for it must require one to advance thus far, because it is nowhere said in that volume by the mouth of God, that He would not, after giving what is there contained, speak again; and if any man has found out for a fact that the Bible contains all that God ever revealed to man he has ascertained it by an immediate revelation.³

In an 1833 letter to his uncle Silas Smith, Joseph wrote:

Seeing that the Lord has never given the world to understand by anything heretofore revealed that he had ceased forever to speak to his creatures when sought unto in a proper manner, why should it be thought a thing incredible that he should be pleased to speak again in these last days for their salvation? Perhaps you may be surprised at this assertion that I should say “for the salvation of his creatures in these last days” since we have already in our possession a vast volume of his word [the Bible] which he has previously given. But you will admit that the word spoken to Noah was not sufficient for Abraham. . . . Isaac, the promised seed, was not required to rest his hope upon the promises made to his father Abraham, but was privileged with the assurance of [God’s] approbation in the sight of Heaven by the direct voice of the Lord to him. . . .

I have no doubt but that the holy prophets and apostles and saints in ancient days were saved in the Kingdom of God. . . . I may believe that Enoch walked with God. . . . I may believe that Abraham communed with God and conversed with angels. . . . I may believe that Elijah was taken to Heaven in a chariot of fire with fiery horses. I may believe that the saints saw the Lord and conversed with him face to face after his resurrection. I may believe that the Hebrew Church came to Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the Heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels. I may believe that they looked into Eternity and saw the Judge of all, and Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant; but *will all this purchase an assurance for me, or waft me to the regions of Eternal day with my garments spotless, pure, and white?* Or, must I not rather obtain for myself, by my own faith and diligence, in keeping the commandments of the Lord, an assurance of salvation for myself? *And have I not an equal privilege with the ancient saints?* And will not the Lord hear my prayers, and listen to my cries as soon as he ever did to theirs, if I come to him in the manner they did? Or is he a respecter of persons?⁴

Lee M. McDonald, an Evangelical pastor, posed some fascinating questions relative to the present closed canon of Christian scripture. “The first question,” he writes, “and the most important one, is whether the church was right in perceiving the need for a closed canon of scriptures.” McDonald also asks, “Did such a move toward a closed canon of scriptures ultimately (and unconsciously) limit the presence and power of the Holy Spirit in the church? More precisely, does the recognition of absoluteness of the biblical canon minimize the presence and activity of God in the church today? . . . On what biblical or historical grounds has the inspiration of God been limited to the written documents that the Church now calls its Bible?” McDonald poses other issues, but let me refer to his final question: “If the Spirit inspired only the written documents of the first century, does that mean that the same Spirit does not speak today in the church about matters that are of significant concern?”⁵

I have my own set of questions to pose alongside McDonald:

1. Who authorized the canon to be closed? Does not such a move inhibit one's search for new truth, block one's openness to a later revelation from God, and, in essence, cause a people to be hardened and shut off from subsequent divine illumination? Nephi warned: "Therefore, wo be unto him that is at ease in Zion! Wo be unto him that crieth: All is well! . . . Yea, wo be unto him that saith: We have received, and we need no more! And in fine, wo unto all those who tremble, and are angry because of the truth of God! For behold, he that is built upon the rock receiveth it with gladness" (2 Nephi 28:24–25, 27–28).

2. Who decided that the Bible was and forevermore would be the final written word of God? Why would one suppose that the closing words of the Apocalypse represented the "end of the prophets"?

3. Latter-day Saints teach the same basic message that Jesus and Peter and Paul and John delivered to the unbelieving Jews of their day—that the heavens have once again been opened, that new light and knowledge have burst upon the earth, and that God has chosen to reveal himself through the ministry of his Beloved Son and the Master's ordained Apostles. Do Latter-day Saints find themselves today in a hauntingly reminiscent position relative to the continuing and ongoing mind and will of God?

The fact of the matter is that no branch of Christianity limits itself entirely to the biblical text alone in making doctrinal decisions and in applying biblical principles. Roman Catholics turn to scripture, to church tradition, and to the magisterium for answers. Protestants, particularly Evangelicals, turn to linguists and scripture scholars for their answers, as well as to post–New Testament church councils and creeds. This seems, at least in my view, to be in violation of *Sola Scriptura*, the clarion call of the Reformation to rely solely upon scripture itself. In fact, there is no final authority on scriptural interpretation when differences arise, which of course they do.

The Bible is a magnificent tool in the hands of God, but it is too often used as a club or a weapon in the hands of men and women. For a long time now, the Bible has been used to settle disputes of every imaginable kind, even those that the prophets never intended to settle. Creeds and biblical interpretations in the nineteenth century served as much to distinguish and divide as they did to inform and unite.

Infallibility

What do people mean when they speak of biblical *infallibility*? The following are a few definitions of the word provided in theological dictionaries:

“The characteristic of being incapable of failing to accomplish a predetermined purpose. . . . The Bible will not fail in its ultimate purpose of revealing God and the way of salvation to humans. In Roman Catholic theology infallibility is also extended to the teaching of the church (magisterium or dogma) under the authority of the pope as the chief teacher and earthly head of the body of Christ.”⁶

“Commitment to a belief that the Bible is completely trustworthy as a guide to salvation and the life of faith and will not fail to accomplish its purpose. Some equate ‘inerrancy’ and ‘infallibility’; others do not. For those who do not, infallibility does not necessarily entail inerrancy.”⁷

“A reference to the doctrine that the Bible is unfailing in its purpose. In some usages of the term the Bible’s authority may be restricted to matters of salvation.”⁸

“*Infallible* signifies the quality of neither misleading nor being misled and so safeguards in categorical terms the truth that Holy Scripture is a sure, safe and reliable rule and guide in all matters.”⁹

Many Latter-day Saints would have no difficulty with such definitions of biblical infallibility. From our perspective, the essential message of the Bible is true and from God, and to that extent the Bible is accomplishing its divine purpose on the earth. The New Testament teaches powerfully and consistently that salvation is in Christ and that his is the only name by which that salvation comes (see Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9–11). It teaches of the absolute necessity for faith in Jesus Christ and all that that faith entails (repentance, baptism and rebirth, obedient discipleship). In fact, we do believe that the hand of God has been over the preservation of the biblical materials such that what we have now is what the Almighty would have us possess. In the words of Elder Bruce R. McConkie, “We cannot avoid the conclusion that a divine providence is directing all things as they should be. This means that the Bible, as it now is, contains that portion of the Lord’s word” that the present world is prepared to receive.¹⁰

Indeed, although Latter-day Saints do not believe that the Bible now contains all that it once contained, the Bible is a remarkable book of scripture, one that inspires, reproves, corrects, and instructs (see 2 Timothy 3:16). It is the word of God. Our task, according to President George Q. Cannon, is to engender faith in the Bible:

As our duty is to create faith in the word of God in the mind of the young student, we scarcely think that object is best attained by making the mistakes of translators

[or transmitters] the more prominent part of our teachings. Even children have their doubts, but it is not our business to encourage those doubts. Doubts never convert; negations seldom convince. . . . The clause in the Articles of Faith regarding mistakes in the translation of the Bible was never inserted to encourage us to spend our time in searching out and studying those errors, but to emphasize the idea that it is the truth and the truth only that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints accepts, no matter where it is found.¹¹

In a revelation received in February 1831 that embraces “the law of the Church,” the early Saints were instructed: “And again, the elders, priests and teachers of this church shall teach the principles of my gospel, which are *in the Bible and the Book of Mormon, in the which is the fulness of the gospel*” (D&C 42:12; emphasis added). In 1982 Elder McConkie explained to Church leaders, “Before we can write the gospel in our own book of life we must learn the gospel as it is written in the books of scripture. The Bible, the Book of Mormon, and the Doctrine and Covenants [and the Pearl of Great Price]—*each of them individually and all of them collectively—contain the fulness of the everlasting gospel.*”¹²

Inerrancy

What, then, do scholars mean when they speak of scriptural *inerrancy*? Note the following definitions:

“The idea that Scripture is completely free from error. It is generally agreed by all theologians who use the term that *inerrancy* at least refers to the trustworthy and authoritative nature of Scripture as God’s Word, which informs humankind of the need for and the way to salvation. Some theologians, however, affirm that the Bible is also completely accurate in whatever it teaches about other subjects, such as science and history.”¹³

“The theological conviction that the Bible is completely truthful and accurate in every respect about all it affirms.”¹⁴

“The variously interpreted teaching that the Bible contains no error in that which it affirms.”¹⁵

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy makes a crucial contribution to this concept: “Since God has nowhere promised an inerrant transmission of Scripture, it is necessary to affirm that only the autographic text of the original documents was inspired and to maintain the need of textual criticism as a means of detecting any slips that may have crept into the text in the course of its transmission.”¹⁶ This is the same position taken by the Evangelical Theological Society.¹⁷

In recent years Bart Ehrman at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill has stirred much controversy through such books as *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture* (Oxford, 1996), *Lost Christianities* (Oxford, 2005), *Misquoting Jesus* (HarperCollins, 2005) and *Jesus Interrupted* (HarperOne, 2009).¹⁸ Ehrman's basic thrust has been to demonstrate that scribal errors that occurred during the translation and transmission of New Testament (NT) manuscripts—whether intentional or unintentional—are so numerous that it is an intellectual and spiritual stretch for men and women today to have complete confidence in their present Bibles. In *Misquoting Jesus*, he waxes personal for a bit and explains how he as an Evangelical graduate student at Princeton lost his faith in the Bible. “I kept reverting to my basic question: how does it help us to say that the Bible is the inerrant word of God if in fact we don't have the words that God inerrantly inspired, but only the words copied by the scribes—sometimes correctly but sometimes (many times!) incorrectly? What good is it to say that the autographs (i.e., the originals) were inspired? We don't *have* the originals! We have only error-ridden copies, and the vast majority of these are centuries removed from the originals and different from them, evidently, in thousands of ways.” Once Ehrman agreed with one of his professors that perhaps “Mark just made a mistake,” he says, “The floodgates opened. For if there could be one little, picayune mistake in Mark 2, maybe there could be mistakes in other places as well.” Having later discovered how many different New Testament manuscripts there were (today some 5,700 Greek manuscripts) and how many variants there were (200,000 to 400,000), he put things into stark perspective: “There are more variations among our manuscripts than there are words in the New Testament.”¹⁹

Christian apologists are quick to point out that Ehrman has lost his faith in Christianity and is therefore not a safe guide to follow in sacred matters. Other apologists eagerly rush forward to affirm that there may indeed be as many as 400,000 New Testament manuscript variants but calmly reply that few if any of the variants are substantive and almost none have doctrinal implications.²⁰ Many times I have asked Christian colleagues how they can be so certain that the scribal errors are inconsequential. On several occasions the response has been some variation of this theme: “Well, they couldn't be very significant, because God has all power, will not be thwarted in his divine purposes, and has surely seen to the preservation of the Bible. The Bible is inerrant.” This is, of course, circular reasoning. It is another way of saying, “I know the Bible is without error or flaw because I know the Bible is inerrant.”

Some Christian students have simply replied, “Why would God allow such a thing to happen to his holy word?” This question is, of course, related to the question of why God would allow evil and suffering in the world, a topic, by the way, that Ehrman addresses in one of his latest works, *God’s Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (HarperCollins, 2008).

It seems to me that the question is not whether there have been scribal errors through the centuries—there have been. The question is not whether the Bible is the word of God—it is. The question is not whether the Bible can be relied upon with confidence if, in fact, there have been errors—it can. Timothy Paul Jones, in a reply to Ehrman, has written: “Supposing that God *did* inspire the original New Testament writings and that he protected those writings from error—are the available copies of the New Testament manuscripts sufficiently accurate for us to grasp the truth that God intended in the first century? I believe that the answer to this question is yes. The ancient manuscripts were not copied perfectly. Yet they *were* copied with enough accuracy for us to comprehend what the original authors intended.”²¹

Jones’s position resembles the one held by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. We do not believe the Bible has to have come down in perfectly untampered fashion, but we do believe its teachings to be spiritually normative and eternally valuable. The Prophet Joseph Smith declared, “I believe the bible, as it ought to be, as it came from the pen of the original writers.”²² And yet errors in the Bible do not tarnish its image for Latter-day Saints. For that matter, while we accept the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price as holy scripture and as God-breathed, we would not rush to proclaim their inerrancy. The marvel is, in fact, the greater that an infinite and perfect Being can work through finite and imperfect humans to deliver his word to his children.

Joseph Smith believed, to be sure, that the message of the Bible was true and from God. We could say that he believed the Bible was “God’s word.” I am not so certain that he or modern Church leaders believed that every sentence recorded in the testaments contained a direct quotation or a transcription of divine direction. As Rowan Williams, the archbishop of Canterbury, writes: “Even on the most conservative estimate of [the four Gospels’] accounts, there must have been episodes imperfectly seen or understood, episodes where direct eyewitness evidence was lacking, along with partially conflicting testimonies. To grant this is simply to allow that the inspiration of the Gospel

narratives is not the gift to the writers of a miraculous God's-eye view. If Jesus' life is a truly human one, the witness to his life must be human as well, and human witness is seldom straightforward or comprehensive."²³

Authority

The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that it is the spirit of revelation within the one called of God that is the energizing force. In most instances, God places the thought into the mind or heart of the revelator, who then assumes the responsibility to clothe the oracle in language. Certainly there are times when a prophet records the words of God directly, but very often the "still small voice" (1 Kings 19:12) whispers to the prophet, who then speaks for God. In short, when God chooses to speak through a person, that person does not become a mindless ventriloquist, an earthly sound system through which God can voice himself. Rather, the person becomes enlightened and filled with intelligence or truth. "What makes us different from most other Christians," Elder Dallin H. Oaks explained, "in the way we read and use the Bible and other scriptures is our belief in continuing revelation. For us, the scriptures are not the ultimate source of knowledge, but what precedes the ultimate source. The ultimate knowledge comes by revelation."²⁴

Nothing could be clearer in the Old Testament, for example, than that many factors impacted the prophetic message—personality, experience, vocabulary, literary talent. The word of the Lord as spoken through Isaiah is quite different from the word of the Lord as spoken through Luke, and both are different from that spoken by Jeremiah or Mark. Further, it is worth noting that stone, leaves, bark, skins, wood, metals, baked clay, and papyrus were all used anciently to record inspired messages. Latter-day Saint concern with the ancients is not the perfection with which such messages were recorded but with the inspiration of the message. More specifically, Latter-day Saints are interested in the fact that the heavens were opened to the ancients, that they had messages to record. In other words, knowing that God is the same yesterday, today, and forever (see Hebrews 13:8) and the fact that he spoke to them at all (however well or poorly it may have been recorded) attests that he can speak to men and women in the here and now. After all, the Bible is only black ink on white paper until the Spirit of God illuminates its true meaning to us; if we have obtained that, there is little need to quibble over the Bible's suitability as a history or science text.

For Latter-day Saints, the traditions of the past regarding scripture, revelation, and canon were altered dramatically by Joseph Smith's First Vision in 1820. God had spoken again, and a "new dispensation" of truth was under way. The ninth article of faith states: "We believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God." We feel deep gratitude for the holy scriptures, but we do not worship scripture. Nor do we feel it appropriate to "set up stakes and set bounds to the works and ways of the Almighty."²⁵

So often I encounter religious persons who state emphatically that their position is based entirely upon "the authority of scripture." The fact is, God is the source of any reputable religious authority. In the words of N. T. Wright, "The risen Jesus, at the end of Matthew's gospel, does not say, 'All authority in heaven and on earth is given to the books you are all going to write,' but 'All authority in heaven and on earth is given to me.'" In other words, "scripture itself points—authoritatively, if it does indeed possess authority!—away from itself and to the fact that final and true authority belongs to God himself, now delegated to Jesus Christ."²⁶

Conclusion

Believers in the Bible are all about the business of reading scripture and seeking to understand its meaning. I agree with Bart Ehrman's statement that "reading a text necessarily involves interpreting a text. I suppose when I started my studies I had a rather unsophisticated view of reading: that the point of reading a text is simply to let the text 'speak for itself,' to uncover the meaning inherent in its words. The reality, I came to see, is that meaning is not inherent and texts do not speak for themselves. If texts could speak for themselves, then everyone honestly and openly reading a text would agree on what the text says. But interpretations of texts abound, and people in fact do *not* agree on what the texts mean."²⁷

Randall Balmer at Barnard College, Columbia, has described the challenge faced by many in the Christian world:

Luther's sentiments created a demand for Scriptures in the vernacular, and Protestants ever since have . . . insisted on interpreting the Bible for themselves, for getting most of the time that they come to the text with their own set of cultural biases and personal agendas.

Underlying this insistence on individual interpretation is the assumption . . . that the plainest, most evident reading of the text is the proper one. Everyone becomes his or her own theologian. There is no longer any need to consult Augustine

or Thomas Aquinas or Martin Luther about their understanding of various passages when you yourself are the final arbiter of what is the correct reading. This tendency, together with the absence of any authority structure within Protestantism, has created a kind of theological free-for-all, as various individuals or groups insist that *their* reading of the Bible is the only possible interpretation.²⁸

In speaking of the value of Church tradition in interpreting scripture, Scott Hahn, a man raised as an Evangelical Protestant but who later converted to Catholicism, wrote that

when our nation's founders gave us the Constitution, they didn't leave it at that. Can you imagine what we'd have today if all they had given us was a document, as good as it is, along with a charge like, "May the spirit of Washington guide each and every citizen"? We'd have anarchy—which is basically what . . . Protestants *do* have when it comes to church unity. Instead, our founding fathers gave us something besides the Constitution; they gave us a government—made up of a President, Congress and a Supreme Court—all of which are needed to administer and interpret the Constitution. And if that's just enough to govern a country like ours, what would it take to govern a worldwide Church?²⁹

Richard L. Bushman has written, "At some level, Joseph's revelations indicate a loss of trust in the Christian ministry." He adds, "For all their learning and their eloquence, the clergy could not be trusted with the Bible. They did not understand what the book meant. *It was a record of revelations, and the ministry had turned it into a handbook. The Bible had become a text to be interpreted rather than an experience to be lived. In the process, the power of the book was lost. . . .* It was the power thereof that Joseph and the other visionaries of his time sought to recover. Not getting it from the ministry, they looked for it themselves."

"To me," Bushman continues, "that is Joseph Smith's significance for our time. He stood on the contested ground where the Enlightenment and Christianity confronted one another, and *his life posed the question, Do you believe God speaks?* Joseph was swept aside, of course, in the rush of ensuing intellectual battles and was disregarded by the champions of both great systems, but *his mission was to hold out for the reality of divine revelation and establish one small outpost where that principle survived.* Joseph's revelatory principle is not a single revelation serving for all time, as the Christians of his day believed regarding the incarnation of Christ, nor a mild sort of inspiration seeping into the minds of all good people, but specific, ongoing directions from God to his people. At a time when the origins of Christianity

were under assault by the forces of Enlightenment rationality, Joseph Smith returned modern Christianity to its origins in revelation.”³⁰

I love the Bible. I treasure its teachings and delight in the spirit of worship that accompanies its prayerful study. My belief in additional scripture does not in any way detract from what I feel toward and learn from the Holy Bible. Studying the Bible lifts my spirits, lightens my burdens, enlightens my mind, and motivates me to seek to live a life of holiness. “When this fact is admitted,” Joseph Smith said in 1834, “that the immediate will of heaven is contained in the Scriptures, are we not bound as rational creatures to live in accordance to all [their] precepts?”³¹ **RE**

Notes

1. Joseph Smith, *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, comp. Joseph Fielding Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1976), 56.
2. J. I. Packer and Thomas C. Oden, eds., *One Faith: The Evangelical Consensus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 42.
3. Smith, *Teachings*, 61.
4. *Personal Writings of Joseph Smith*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2002) 322, 324; emphasis added; spelling and grammar modernized.
5. Lee M. McDonald, *The Formation of the Christian Biblical Canon*, rev. ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), 254–56.
6. Stanley J. Grenz, David Guretzki, and Cherith Fee Nordling, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1999), s.v. “infallibility.”
7. Donald K. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1996), s.v. “Bible, infallibility of the.”
8. Millard J. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, IL: Good News Publishers, 2001), s.v. “infallibility.”
9. “The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy, 1978, Exposition: Infallibility, Inerrancy, Interpretation,” cited in Packer and Oden, *One Faith*, 50.
10. “The Bible: A Sealed Book,” Eighth Annual Church Educational System Religious Educators’ Symposium, August 1984; cited in *Doctrines of the Restoration*, ed. Mark L. McConkie (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1989), 280.
11. *Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon*, ed. Jerreld L. Newquist (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 472.
12. “Holy Writ: Published Anew,” regional representatives seminar, April 2, 1982; in *Doctrines of the Restoration*, 237; emphasis added.
13. Grenz and others, *Pocket Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s.v. “inerrancy.”
14. McKim, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, s.v. “inerrancy, doctrine of.”
15. Erickson, *The Concise Dictionary of Christian Theology*, s.v. “inerrancy, doctrine of.”
16. “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” 48.
17. “Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy,” 51.
18. Other books by Ehrman that are not as pertinent to this topic but raise questions regarding the historicity, reliability, canonicity, and present status of the Bible include *Lost Scriptures: Books That Did Not Make It into the New Testament* (New York: Oxford, 2005), *Peter*,

Paul, and Mary Magdalene: The Followers of Jesus in History and Legend (New York: Oxford, 2006), and *God's Problem: How the Bible Fails to Answer Our Most Important Question—Why We Suffer* (New York: HarperCollins, 2008).

19. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 7, 9, 10, 88–90.

20. See, for example, Timothy Paul Jones, *Misquoting Truth: A Guide to the Fallacies of Bart Ehrman's Misquoting Jesus* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 43–44.

21. Jones, *Misquoting Truth*, 32–33.

22. *The Words of Joseph Smith*, ed. Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1980), 256.

23. Rowan Williams, *Christ on Trial: How the Gospel Unsettles Our Judgment* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2003), xv.

24. Dallin H. Oaks, "Scripture Reading, Revelation, and Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible," *Plain and Precious Truths Restored: The Doctrinal and Historical Significance of the Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995), 2.

25. Smith, *Teachings*, 320–21.

26. N. T. Wright, *The Last Word: Beyond the Bible Wars to a New Understanding of the Authority of Scripture* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), xi, 24.

27. Ehrman, *Misquoting Jesus*, 216.

28. Randall Balmer, *Mine Eyes Have Seen the Glory: A Journey into the Evangelical Subculture in America*, 4th ed. (New York: Oxford, 2006), 24.

29. Scott Hahn and Kimberly Hahn, *Rome Sweet Home: Our Journey to Catholicism* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 1993), 73.

30. Richard Lyman Bushman, *Believing History: Latter-day Saint Essays* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 274; emphasis added.

31. Smith, *Teachings*, 53.