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Editor's Introduction: 
In the Land of the Lotus-Eaters

Daniel C. Peterson

We are the persecuted children of God—the chosen of the Angel Merona. . . . We are of those who believe in those sacred writings, drawn in Egyptian letters on plates of beaten gold, which were handed unto the holy Joseph Smith at Palmyra.

— Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet

For years, I have marveled at the luxuriant, even rank, growth that is anti-Mormonism. The imaginative richness, the aggressive hostility, the fractured reasoning, the historical illiteracy, the sheer oddity of many of the loudest anti-Mormons is for me a thing of wonder. Their endless stream of tracts offers some of the exoticism of a journey through the uncharted jungles of nineteenth-century Africa.

A portion of that—and, I hope, something of the fun of it all—has been chronicled in this Review. I myself have reported on the goofball allegations of Mr. J. Edward ("God Makers") Decker and the incomparable Loftes Tryk, as well as on the malevolent distortions penned by Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. John Weldon. And the well is not yet dry. A new psychological

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2 In a brief review of Ankerberg and Weldon's Behind the Mask of Mormonism, Rev. Dennis A. Wright of Utah Missions, Inc., who may also be a fan of Stephen King and Edgar Allan Poe, describes it as both "intriguing" and "perhaps somewhat frightening." "This volume is heavily annotated," he reports, "and will prove to be a major resource for students of the Mormon Religion." See Dennis A. Wright, "Book Reviews," The Evangel 45/2 (March/April
explanation for the Book of Mormon has just appeared on my doorstep that, if first impressions hold, may push Trykian psycho-
analysis even beyond the outer limits where it now resides.\(^3\) Loftes Tryk triumphans.

Not all anti-Mormon writing is amusing, of course. Not all is
sweetness and light in the weird subculture of the critics.\(^4\) But
even Sandra Tanner, a generally stolid figure from the compara-
tively respectable branch of the anti-Mormon industry, in thinking
of whom the word \textit{whimsical} does not instantly come to mind, is
capable of flights of inspired wackiness. Her recent declaration,
pronounced in a video officially produced and currently dis-
tributed by the Southern Baptist Convention, that the faith of the
Latter-day Saints is as much Hindu as Christian—an assertion
issued with all the confidence of the competent Indologist that she
is not—is a bit of drollery worthy of Ed Decker himself.\(^5\)

Many of our critics should, really, be exempted from the rigid
standards of logic and evidence that hold sway in genuine scholar-
ship. For they are actually writing \textit{fiction}, and all we can ask is that
they write it entertainingly and well, with an aura of what English
professors like to call \textit{verisimilitude}.\(^6\) Sir Arthur Conan Doyle did
so, in the story that introduced Sherlock Holmes to the world.

---

\(^3\) William D. Morain, \textit{The Sword of Laban: Joseph Smith, Jr., and the

\(^4\) See, for instance, the recent attempts by certain professional anti-
Mormons to excuse Lilburn Boggs's "extermination order" and the mob
murder of Joseph Smith. These are discussed in this volume of the \textit{Review}, on pages
85–93.

\(^5\) See Daniel C. Peterson's review of the SBC materials in this volume of the

\(^6\) Hugh Nibley, \textit{Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Tell-
ing Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young}, ed. David J. Whittaker (Salt
Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), represents (at over 700 pages) the
most extensive appreciation of anti-Mormon ingenuity in print. Unfortunately,
though, Professor Nibley labors under the misimpression that the people he
discusses think their works depict actual reality. Once one realizes that most
anti-Mormon literature is a species of creative writing, it appears in a wholly
different light.
Consider the meticulous research that lies behind the following passage, permitting Sir Arthur such uncanny insight into Mormon speech patterns and ecclesiastical organization. “What,” his version of Brigham Young demands,

is the thirteenth rule in the code of the sainted Joseph Smith? “Let every maiden of the true faith marry one of the Elect; for if she wed a Gentile, she commits a grievous sin.” . . .

Upon this one point your whole faith shall be tested—so it has been decided in the Sacred Council of Four.7

Passages like this have given great pleasure to my children since I introduced *A Study in Scarlet* to them several years ago. Listening to a tape of the story during a trip to Canada certainly helped to pass the time, as we laughed till our sides ached whenever the story touched upon “the chosen of the Angel Merona.” Furthermore, “the Sacred Council of Four” has a delightful tinge of Gothic horror to it. One imagines incense and hooded priests meeting in decayed medieval crypts. It is better than “the halcyon council of fifty,” a phrase given to us in the seventies by Peter Bart’s deservedly forgotten paranoid novel, *Thy Kingdom Come*. It is much to be preferred over Rüdiger Hauth’s too colloquial recent description of the church’s leadership—based on his alleged field research on actual Mormon speech in Utah—as “the Big Fifteen.”8 (Who could possibly work himself into a pleasurable hysteria about sacerdotal tyranny on the basis of so obviously childish a title?) Our debt to Sir Arthur is incalculable.

Unfortunately, though, very little anti-Mormon literature maintains this high quality. For instance, John L. Smith’s 1969 fantasy yarn, *Brigham Smith: A Novel*—one of the few anti-Mormon books to openly acknowledge its fictional character—is almost stupefyingly dull.9 Its didacticism is unspeakably tedious,

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7 Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet*, 89.
its characters wooden. Another species of anti-Mormon writing, the relatively unknown Chick publications, literally comprises comic books with little in the way of literary pretension. Besides, apart from their amusing little tract entitled “The Visitors,” the Chick people have clearly put most of their energy into their anti-Catholic comic line—including “The Death Cookie” (dealing with the Eucharist) and their memorable series about “Alberto.” (“As a Jesuit priest, it was his job to infiltrate Protestant churches. But when he read the Bible, he saw that Catholicism couldn’t save him. . . . After his conversion, Alberto became a hunted man. No Jesuit can leave his order . . . and live!”) 10

Not all specimens in the genre are so bad, of course. Ed Decker, James Spencer, and Bill Schnoebelen—who, I would judge, have brought a sensibility formed on the Ghostbusters movies to their writings—have placed several successful products on the anti-Mormon market. Mr. Decker has even created a hit pseudo-documentary film and, for a time at least, franchised his “Saints Alive in Jesus” chain to anti-Mormon zealots across North America. Loftes Tryk may have authored the most hilarious anti-Mormon spoof ever written. 11

Janis Hutchinson’s recent The Mormon Missionaries uses a simple but readable story format to introduce her fans to a world from which all cogent Latter-day Saint arguments have been miraculously erased. 12 Judging from the frequency with which this motif occurs, I suppose that such escapist romances—in which infallibly brilliant cult-busters handily defeat craven, stupid Mormons—serve an important psychological function for some writers and readers. They are rather like the old Doc Savage adventure novels, which enthralled me for several weeks during my

10 The Chick publications are featured, along with many other anti-Mormon, anti-Catholic, and anti-just-about-everybody-else materials, in the Bible Baptist Bookstore: Catalogue 1998, which emerges from Pensacola, Florida.
preteen years. There can be little question among careful observers, for example, that the self-educated but devastatingly capable Baptist preacher who brings Brigham Smith, an oddly uncommitted (fictional) member of the Quorum of the Twelve, to Protestant fundamentalism is John L. Smith’s own Walter Mitty-ish self-projection.¹³

But the quality of even the most diverting recent anti-Mormon offerings is, at best, uneven. Consider some representative specimens: *The Evangel*, the monthly “newspaper” distributed by Oklahoma-based Utah Missions, Inc., is uproariously funny, but subliterate. (Moreover, as I write, *The Evangel* has been taken over by new management, and nervous fans are uncertain whether its legendary capacity for self-parody will survive.) The Tanners’ newsletter is earnest but almost always (even when dealing with supposed satanic ritual abuse) a bit soporific. By contrast, the entertaining 1995 volume entitled *Decker’s Complete Handbook on Mormonism* thrills its readers with warnings against the Latter-day Saints’ sinister scheme to set up “a political kingdom, not a spiritual one.”¹⁴

They believe it is their destiny to seize the reins of power in America and turn it into a theocracy, a religious dictatorship, led by a prophet-king who would be the supreme earthly head of the Melchizedek priesthood... Should the Mormons ever succeed in

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¹³ In his recently self-published autobiography, Rev. Smith tells many tales about his easy triumphs over Latter-day Saint professors and missionaries, and even over the president of the Council of the Twelve (who “literally frothed at the mouth” at Rev. Smith’s irrefutable brilliance). See John L. Smith, *The Extraordinary Life and Ministry of an Ordinary Preacher!* (Marlow, Okla.: Utah Missions, Inc., 1997), 50–52, 62–65. An entire chapter of the autobiography (p. 74) boasts about how “two Brigham Young University professors with earned doctor’s degrees wrote a 255 page book about me in 1992... The book, *Offenders for a Word*, mentions The Utah Evangel, The Evangel, Utah Missions, Inc., John L. Smith (Rev. Smith, etc.) by name 159 times (my count).” For those who have actually seen Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1992), no comment on this bit of self-delusion is needed. (Those who haven’t read it should repent.)

creating their church-state . . . they might . . . criminalize soul-winning efforts by Bible-believing Christians.15

The Handbook even furnishes titillating evidence to back up its charges: “There have been rumors of ‘special assignments’ being handled for the LDS leaders by faithful FBI agents. These agents can be rewarded upon retirement from the agency with well-paying jobs in the church’s ‘private army,’ the LDS Church Security.”16 And there is (at least, within the fictional world invented by the Mr. Decker) nineteenth-century historical proof for this, too. “Though today LDS leaders will deny it,” the Handbook informs its audience, “there were marauding bands of theocratic vigilantes known as ‘Danites’ or ‘Avenging Angels’—almost a Mormon Ku Klux Klan—who would often exact fearsome retribution upon any who were seen to be out of order with the rulers of the church.”17

This is not bad writing. As imaginative literature, it is far superior to The Evangel or the Utah Lighthouse newsletter. And it illustrates wonderfully the contention of Professor Terryl Givens, in his recent Oxford-published book on anti-Mormon rhetoric, that enemies of the church residing in America, a nation that prides itself on religious tolerance, have frequently been obliged to remove Mormonism from “the sphere of religion”—to make it something political or even criminal—in order to justify their hostility.18 But it doesn’t terrify. It is too abstract. It doesn’t have

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15 Ibid., 187.
16 Ibid., 149.
17 Ibid., 119; compare 132, 166–67. There are undoubtedly people who actually believe this stuff—even though I strongly suspect that Mr. Decker himself does not. In two fascinating books, Daniel Pipes has looked at similar thinking elsewhere. See Daniel Pipes, The Hidden Hand: Middle East Fears of Conspiracy (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996); Conspiracy: How the Paranoid Style Flourishes and Where It Comes From (New York: Free Press, 1997). Anti-Mormon conspiracy fantasists, and the demagogues who manipulate them, also deserve the attention of historians and social psychologists.

18 Terryl L. Givens, The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997). Not only fundamentalist Protestants resort to such characterization. Consider the case of John B. Wright, Rocky Mountain Divide: Selling and Saving the West (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993). Prof. Wright, a geographer and environmen-
the specificity, the concrete detail, that would make it truly effective as fiction. Consider, by contrast, the following very effective bit of writing from Conan Doyle:

Strange rumours began to be bandied about—rumours of murdered immigrants and rifled camps in regions where Indians had never been seen. Fresh women appeared in the harems of the Elders—women who pined and wept, and bore upon their faces the traces of an unextinguishable horror. Belated wanderers upon the mountains spoke of gangs of armed men, masked, stealthy, and noiseless, who flitted by them in the darkness. These tales and rumours took substance and shape, and were corroborated and recorrobated, until they resolved themselves into a definite name. To this day, in the lonely ranches of the West, the name of the Danite Band, or the Avenging Angels, is a sinister and an ill-omened one.\(^{19}\)

One can almost see the Danites, feel their knives against one’s throat. Granted, this passage, like that from Decker’s Handbook, is based on nothing but paranoid rumors and a creative imagination. Nonetheless, it makes the imaginary Danites as tangible as they will ever be. Zane Grey’s classic Western yarn Riders of the Purple Sage and Stephen White’s contemporary potboiler Higher Authority could also serve as models for anti-Mormon novelists in the paranoid style.\(^{20}\) Sometimes a bit of half-digested fact can be transformed into a horrifying tale, like a grain of sand in an oyster. Here, for instance, is a very recent excerpt taken from San Francisco’s Vzglyad: Weekly Russian Language Newspaper. The article was apparently inspired by a minor incident or two.

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19 Conan Doyle, A Study in Scarlet, 87.
involving a small gang of militant adolescent vegetarian animal rights activists. The Mormons, in other words.

**Mormons Move for Attack**

Residents of the American city of Salt Lake City are being subjected to real terror at the hands of the Mormon sect. Using clubs, knives, bottles with flammable liquids and homemade bombs, the Mormons are attempting to convert residents of the city to the "true faith." As fervent opponents of alcohol and tobacco—and some of them are also zealous vegetarians—the Mormons are storming bars and meat markets. They are calling themselves soldiers fighting against the worldly vices. One of the most widespread methods of intimidation is the so-called "stone sandwich." This is when they place the victim face down on the pavement and kick the back of his head with their boots. As has been reported by representatives of the local police force, which has had to intervene often of late in the conflicts involving sect members, after such torture many people fear going to bars. And several even lose altogether the desire to eat meat or smoke.21

The aspiring fictionalist must appear to actually believe what he or she is creating. One of the most effective passages in Kurt Van Gorden's *Mormonism* is a footnote in which he describes how, after opponents of the church murdered the Prophet Joseph Smith on 27 June 1844, the eight witnesses to the Book of Mormon all followed the schismatic pretender James J. Strang. Real history, of course, knows that this was impossible. Christian Whitmer had succumbed to a chronic infection in 1835. Peter Whitmer Jr. died of tuberculosis in 1836. Joseph Smith Sr. passed away in 1840. Hyrum Smith died moments before his brother Joseph in a hail of anti-Mormon bullets. In other words, four of the eight witnesses could not possibly have followed Strang after Joseph Smith's death, since they predeceased the Prophet.

Samuel Smith, it is true, outlived Joseph. But there seems to have been little time or opportunity for him to have affiliated himself with the Strangites in Voree, Wisconsin, for, as a result of a fever contracted while fleeing an anti-Mormon mob and recovering the bodies of his two older brothers, he died at Nauvoo on 30 July 1844, just slightly more than a month after Joseph and Hyrum. (Strang did not even make his claim to church leadership until August.) Hiram Page lived until 1852, but, with his Whitmer in-laws, had severed his ties to the church by 1838. He spent the remaining years of his life in Missouri. Jacob Whitmer, likewise alienated from the church, worked as a shoemaker and farmer in Richmond, Missouri, until his death in 1856. John Whitmer lived until 1878, but he too had separated himself from the church in 1838, and thereafter he lived and died in Missouri. Neither Hiram Page nor Jacob Whitmer nor John Whitmer seems to have moved to James Strang’s colony at Voree, nor to the more famous later headquarters of the group at Beaver Island.

Such chronological problems would obviously be fatal to a work of genuine history. But they are entirely acceptable in certain kinds of fiction. Captain Kirk and Mr. Spock are free to walk the streets of twentieth-century San Francisco; Bill and Ted can have an excellent adventure with Socrates, St. Joan of Arc, and Napoleon. We must be careful to judge anti-Mormon literature by the standards appropriate to it. An epic is not a bad lyric poem because it is too long, just as an opera is not a poorly written symphony because it has singing and a plot. Epics and operas are essentially different from lyric poems and symphonies, with their own rules. So, too, theological fantasy literature is not to be rejected solely because of wild inaccuracies.

Mr. Van Gorden stands behind his footnote.

Even academics at respectable universities have entered into the writing of Mormon fiction. Alan Wolfe, a sociologist at Boston University, composed an article for the 23 February 1998 issue of The New Republic that summons us into a parallel universe, where the Latter-day Saints, who are typically castigated among intellectualoids as crypto-fascists seeking to impose their reactionary values on everybody else, are dismissed as devotees of a
“weightless spirituality.” In parts of his essay, Prof. Wolfe sounds rather like an evangelical countercultist, denouncing Joseph Smith as “a confidence man,” dismissing Mormons as “obedient automatons,” judging them guilty of “cultspeak,” and falsely accusing them of “lacking a conception of grace.”

But all this is merely conventional. What is distinctive in Prof. Wolfe’s article is far more interesting. He hears echoes of the Unabomber in Stephen Covey. He breaks dramatically with the usual Protestant accusations of “works righteousness” and lets his originality shine when, no doubt to the utter astonishment of most people, he denounces the Latter-day Saints for “their efforts to undermine the moral legitimacy of the nuclear family.” Seeming even to contradict his own edicts on grace, Prof. Wolfe tells New Republic readers that the “morally anarchistic” Latter-day Saints believe themselves to be saved without works.

We have, with the erstwhile sociologist Alan Wolfe, definitely entered the realm of the literary imagination, leaving prosaic things like logic behind. “A foolish consistency is the hobgoblin of little minds,” said Emerson, “adored by little statesmen and philosophers and divines. With consistency a great soul has simply nothing to do.” “Do I contradict myself?” asked Walt Whitman. “Very well then. . . . I contradict myself; I am large. . . . I contain multitudes.”

Mormons, writes Alan Wolfe, are moral relativists.

The Mormon God was, as we now say, nonjudgmental.

You need not have been of high status to become one

---


with God. Nor was it important that you led a life free of wrongdoing. 25

Rather than holding up to his followers a vision and demanding that they follow it, [Joseph Smith] divined what his followers wanted and offered it to them. 26

Americans want to be religious without having to suffer through the denial, the sacrifice, and the hard-boards endurance that religious asceticism demands. Joseph Smith offered them a way to do so. A religion without a conception of sin is, for all its earnestness, nondemanding. Spirit need never stand in the way of success. Joseph Smith was not in the business of building a movement of men of sorrow. 27

[He] understood one thing. Take insecure people, offer them an answer to their problems, clothe your advice in language that seems intelligent but is mostly gibberish, proclaim the world rotten yet demand changes that require little or no transformation in how people actually live—and, who knows, maybe you will be called a prophet. 28

But this riveting attempt to sketch “a nonjudgmental religion . . . linked to a hierarchical and authoritarian structure” 29 simply goes too far. While they may want to believe it, I suspect that most readers lack the tolerance for contradiction that Prof. Wolfe so obviously possesses, and that their willingness to suspend disbelief must simply collapse at so counterintuitive and indeed counterfactual a fantasia. Moreover, it is clear that Alan Wolfe himself senses the problem. “Nonjudgmentalism is usually associated with tolerance,” 30 he rather lamely admits, just prior to launching an attack on the Latter-day Saints for suppressing dissident opinions.

26 Ibid., 29.
27 Ibid., 30.
28 Ibid., 34.
29 Ibid., 31.
30 Ibid.
So his Mormons are still oppressive fascists, but they are broad-minded ones.

With my colleague Ralph C. Hancock, of Brigham Young University’s Department of Political Science, I sent the following letter to The New Republic:

For readers even modestly familiar with the religion called “Mormonism,” a reply to Alan Wolfe is unnecessary. Beginning with the error-packed first paragraph (from the mistaken reference to “evening prayers” to the final conflation of Book of Mormon translation with the legal organization of the Church), Wolfe’s treatment of basic facts reads like a product of that children’s game in which a faintly whispered message is circulated from ear to ear until its resemblance to the original is just enough to be amusing. And where argument is concerned, the central premise of Wolfe’s tortured interpretation of Mormonism as the weightless and relativistic postmodern religion—i.e., that Covey’s contributions to the popular literature on personal effectiveness somehow provide a key to unlocking the supposed secrets of the Latter-day Saints—is preposterous on its face, as the author once almost acknowledged.

Still, for the sake of any who may be as unfamiliar with Mormonism as Alan Wolfe, allow us to set straight just a few matters that this bizarre article has confused. First is its uninformed equation of “Mormon” with “Utah,” and of both with polygamy. Practicing polygamists are excommunicated from the Church, and have been for well over a century. Moreover, an “intolerant nonjudgmentalism” is not only difficult to imagine, it is utterly impossible to recognize in Mormonism.

But Wolfe’s problems stem largely from his uncritical dependence on John Brooke’s deeply flawed book, The Refiner’s Fire. Brooke knew little about Mormon history and understood less about Mormon doctrine. Thus, New Republic readers are falsely informed that Mormons “reject the possibility of grace”
INTRODUCTION

and are subjected, once again, to Brooke's fanciful derivation of the cold fusion fiasco from Mormon theology. No doubt some at the resolutely secularist University of Utah would love to blame Mormonism for that embarrassing venture into junk science. Alas, though, Professors Pons and Fleischmann were not Mormon. On the other hand, their earliest and sharpest critic, a physicist at Brigham Young University, is.

Wolfe's portrayal of Mormonism as a "nondemanding" faith is, simply, ridiculous. Its tithe-paying membership, its monthly fasts, its unpaid clergy and missionaries, the hundreds of settlements its religiously motivated people established in the inhospitable Great Basin and beyond, and the unnumbered graves they left scattered across the Midwest and the Rocky Mountains as they fled mob violence, testify eloquently and irrefutably to the contrary.31

Another writer on Latter-day Saint subjects with an imaginative gift is John B. Wright, who teaches geography at New Mexico State University. Most of Prof. Wright's fictions are so mundane that one is tempted to dismiss them, at first, merely as errors. When he identifies Sen. Bob Bennett as the governor of Utah, or describes the election of Deedee Corradini, a non-Mormon woman, to the mayoralty of Salt Lake City as unprecedented and an "historical breakdown of Mormon political dominance," or, in all solemnity, cites the exterior of the Salt Lake Temple as an illustration of "the influence of astrology on the early Church," his inventive gifts have clearly failed him.32 When he compares the orientation of Mormon temples toward the east to the supposedly similar orientation of "all Muslim mosques," one is actually embarrassed for him.33 His implicit depiction of Latter-day Saints as quasi-Nazis (via a dubious recollection from Temple Square) and his account of the anti-intellectual tyrannies of the Brethren are merely derivative, whereas his mind-reading of the young Joseph

31 As of this writing, it seems that our letter apparently did not make the cut.  
32 Wright, Rocky Mountain Divide, 139, 142.  
33 Ibid., 143.
Smith and his narrative of “Walters the magician”—the very possibly mythical occult master whose disciple Joseph is supposed to have been—are but warmed-over Fawn Brodie.34

Disciple to his master, Prof. Wright follows Brodie in telling us precisely what Joseph read and thought at the time he invented the Book of Mormon, as well as in accepting at face value the anti-Mormon affidavits gathered by Philastus Hurlbut. According to Prof. Wright, the Book of Mormon relates the story of Hebrews who came to the New World and promptly split into three groups, the Nephites, the Jaredites, and the Lamanites. Before the Lamanites annihilated the other two factions, these Hebrews had spread throughout North and South America, but had devoted themselves particularly to building forts all over New York State. A central figure in the Book of Mormon is the Aztec god Quetzalcoatl, and several of the Witnesses to the gold plates recanted their testimonies.35

In order to complete his picture of Mormonism, Prof. Wright also shares something of Latter-day Saint history with his readers. Joseph and Hyrum Smith, for instance, were arrested while trying to flee Nauvoo, and, following their deaths, Brigham Young succeeded to “the position of infallible living Prophet.” It was he, says Prof. Wright, who, during the trek westward, introduced the ordinance of proxy baptism for the dead in order to make surviving Mormons feel better about the loss of hundreds of their fellow believers along the trail. Having been vicariously baptized, the souls of these already baptized dead Mormons would be able to “enter Celestial Glory (also known as Zion) or even Exultation [sic].”36

Clearly, Prof. Wright is getting more inventive. But, on the whole, this is not very good stuff. Just when we are about to despair, though, John Wright serves up a pair of unmistakable, if minor, comic gems. He explains that temple garments “are worn by true believers in preparation for the Millennium, when all Gentiles

34 Ibid., 142, 145–46, 152–53, 158. For her landmark discoveries, Prof. Wright tells his readers on page 155, Mrs. Brodie was immediately excommunicated from the church in 1976. (Her supposed “discoveries” were published in 1945.)


36 Ibid., 158–59.
will be struck naked by the Lord, and only Mormons will be spared the embarrassment.”\textsuperscript{37} And, discussing the Salt Lake Temple, with its statue of the angel Moroni atop the central tower on the east, he tells his enthralled readers that “Conservative Mormons believe that when Christ returns to Earth to usher in His Millennial Kingdom, His first stop will be Salt Lake City. When this blessed event occurs, the statue of the Angel Moroni will spring to life and blow his trumpet to herald the beginning of God’s rule on Earth.”\textsuperscript{38}

And Now for Something Completely Original

There is, clearly, some imaginative and entertaining work going on among critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Still, fresh ideas never hurt. And so it is with considerable delight that I here offer a portion of an article from the left-leaning Cairo weekly magazine \textit{Rūz al-Yūsuf}.\textsuperscript{39} So far as I am aware, this marks its very first appearance in English. I am confident that some of our anti-Mormon friends, relatively few of whom are completely comfortable in Arabic, will find it an important and useful document, as well as an inspiration to spur them on to yet greater achievements. I offer it to them as a service.

Companies selling delusion seek profit in any form and in any place. Those who believe in fairy tales and are trying to escape the troubles of the world yield themselves to such groups in England and America and India. And, because these people occasionally visit Egypt, or even, by chance, live here, it is only natural that we find propagandists for those fairy tales in our midst, as well as the people who exploit them—whether they are in the pyramid or in al-Ma‘ādī.

\textsuperscript{37} Ibid., 149.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 142–43.
\textsuperscript{39} Ḥamdi al-Ḥusaynī and Suhayr ʿAtā, “Diyānāt jādīda ʿt al-hāram wa al-Ma‘ādī,” \textit{Rūz al-Yūsuf} (16 October 1995). I am grateful to John Gee for locating this item for me in the Sterling Library at Yale University and providing me with a photocopy of it. The translation is mine.
New Sects in the Pyramid and in al-Ma‘ādī

Sect Center: The “Mormons” in Tel Aviv, while the Egyptian Church Warns against Them

Sitting before the Sphinx, Searching for the Secret Buried beneath It

The Jews Circulate Rumors: Resurrection Day in the Chambers of the Great Pyramid

A cocktail religion, a blend of Christianity and Judaism to which more than 200 American residents of Cairo adhere, practices its strange rites to the tunes of a piano in an elegant villa in the serene neighborhood of al-Ma‘ādī. Their so-called prophet is alive and dwelling in the state of Utah, the main center of the sect of the “Mormons.” The number of their adherents is growing among the foreigners who live in Egypt.

Their branch in Tel Aviv is responsible for their diffusion in the Middle East. The Cairo branch is secret, despite the passage of more than 15 years since the beginning of its activity in Egypt at the hand of a teacher in the American University in Cairo. The Ministry of the Interior refused their request to practice their religion openly after the Egyptian Church warned against permitting them to proselytize, since they consider them infidels [kāfirūn].

Their first so-called prophet was killed in a New York jail following his arrest on charges of horse thievery. He claimed that an angel named “Mormon” had delivered to him the fanciful teachings of a new sect written upon plates of gold in two languages, Hebrew and ancient Egyptian.

Because of this imagined prophet, and at precisely nine o’clock every Friday morning, the traffic gets a bit snarled on Road 9 in al-Ma‘ādī, as the proprietor of Villa 16 receives his guests, who arrive steadily until their number reaches about 150 men and women. They know each other well, and no stranger is permitted to enter unless he has received prior permission.
from the proprietor of the villa, the representative of the so-called prophet.

This American deputy works for an oil company, and has lived in Egypt for the last fifteen years.

All enter into a spacious, air-conditioned hall, arranged in a half circle of comfortable chairs resembling those in deluxe hotels. Before them is a podium, behind which stands or sits the proprietor of the villa, the representative of the so-called prophet in America. Then hymnals are distributed, and a pretty young woman, the daughter of the villa’s proprietor, begins to play the piano in a portion of the room reserved for prayer.

 Everybody knows the teachings and sticks to them. Thus smoking is not permitted, because their sect considers it forbidden. Partaking of alcoholic beverages is also prohibited, particularly during hymns. Silence envelops them for more than two consecutive hours, during which they sing strange songs, some of them in English and some of them in the language of the red Indians who lived in the United States before the arrival of the white man. Before the closing of the hymns, two boys, whose ages do not exceed fourteen years, pass by. One of them carries small cups, in which there is a little ordinary water. The second carries small pieces of white bread. And before the hour hand reaches twelve o’clock noon, the piano girl introduces a selection from among their most famous common hymns, indicating the conclusion of the prayers.

Most of the adherents of this fantastic sect are African-Americans, whose women participate half naked in the singing of the hymns.

Dr. Martin Harris, a communications teacher at the American University in Cairo from the midseventies until 1982, was the first to introduce these ideas into Egypt. He was zealous in preaching them and inviting his students to convert, to consider it the ideal sect. After he reached the age of 79, he departed Cairo for the state of Utah, the chief headquarters of the sect of the
“Mormons.” But he continues to be in constant contact with his colleagues in Cairo. Indeed, he visited them and participated in their rites just last May.

Dr. Martin explained to a number of Egyptian youth with whom he met during his latest visit to Egypt the possibility of helping them to obtain permanent residence in the United States and of seeking opportunities for appropriate employment for them—on condition that they declare their acceptance of “Mormonism” and their readiness to work as missionaries for it in various Third World countries in exchange for a sizable sum of money. For the principles of “Mormonism” impose upon every individual above the age of eighteen the duty of spreading these principles and proselytizing on their behalf in every place, but especially in poor countries. They stipulate huge amounts of money specifically for those laboring to spread these principles abroad.

There is a significant connection between the Jewish religion and the “Mormons.” The Israeli government has designated a church for their worship, besides giving them material support both open (e.g., donations from Jews) and covert (e.g., laundering large amounts of money from abroad).

Every “Mormon” who visits Egypt must necessarily also go to the central headquarters in Tel Aviv, for a visit to their temples there, much like a Hajj pilgrimage, cleanses the “Mormon” from whatever sins he has committed throughout his life. This is the reason that the Israeli government has been so enthusiastic about supporting them, considering them a means for attracting tourists.

In 1985, the main headquarters in the state of Utah undertook the translation of their holy book into Arabic, indicating thereby the beginning of their attempt to bring the Arabs into their strange sect. It was printed in the same form and size as the scriptures, under the title The Mormons . . . A Second Witness for Jesus Christ.
The history of the appearance of the sect of the "Mormons" goes back to a night in the month of September 1828, when Joseph Smith, a farmboy from a village close to the American city of New York, was performing his usual worship. In an instant of clarity, he beheld the walls of his room split open. A brilliant light shone out from them, surrounding an angel whom the Lord had sent to him from heaven in order to instruct him in the teachings peculiar to the new sect. The angel gave to himself the name of the prophet "Mārmūnī," and led him to the place of the book of "the Mormons," which the Lord had hidden in a mountain near the village of Manchester in the state of New York. He hit upon a stone box, resembling marble, which contained sheets bearing the teachings of the new religion on plates of gold, in the Hebrew and ancient Egyptian languages. He claimed that the Lord commanded him to tell nobody about them, to keep secret their calling him a prophet, and to return them to the Lord after reading them (while remembering the doctrines they contained). The young Joseph, who had left his studies after only four years of schooling, gathered a number of Jewish merchants who dwelt in his village and, after he had told them his story, they followed him. They proclaimed him a prophet for the "Mormons." They traveled about with him through several states, propagandizing for their sect, until his arrest by the American police on charges of horse theft and his killing in the jail.

The Mormons are considered among the most reactionary forces in the United States. Indeed, they formed an alliance two years ago with the Jews and the Catholics, and founded a special television station in the state of Virginia at a cost of about thirty million dollars for the purpose of opposing the rights of women, working for the defeat of liberal candidates for the U.S. Congress, and resisting the constitutional principle calling for the separation of church and state.
They are, furthermore, the wealthiest class after the Jews.

Among them is the owner of the international Marriott hotels.

The indications of creative license in this article are many, including (1) the presiding branch in Tel Aviv, (2) the Egyptian government’s rejection of a Mormon request to proselytize, (3) the New York jail, (4) the charge of “horse thievery,” (5) the address of the Friday meetingplace, (6) the ethnic make-up of the congregation, (7) the language of the hymns, (8) the mode of dress of the worshipers, (9) the name of the professor, (10) the offer of help in emigration in exchange for converting, (11) salaries for missionaries, (12) the church’s emphasis on proselytizing in poor countries, (13) Israeli subsidies to the church, (14) the sin-forgiving character of the temple in Tel Aviv, (15) the existence of the temple in Tel Aviv, (16) the enthusiasm of the Israelis for their Latter-day Saint allies, (17) the name of the Book of Mormon, (18) the date of Moroni’s visit, (19) Moroni’s new name, (20) the Jewishness of Joseph’s early followers (does anybody detect a recurrent theme here?), (21) the circumstances surrounding the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, and (22) the Virginia television station and its political agenda. And so on and so forth. But the article has verisimilitude. It furnishes authentic, or at least seemingly authentic, details. One can even imagine that the authors of the piece may once have visited a Latter-day Saint service—although the incorrect street address lessens one’s confidence that this is so.

I like this article. I hope you liked it. I invite readers to send in the zaniest, the weirdest, the most paranoid, the most obviously off-the-wall anti-Mormon claims and arguments. Perhaps we will even select and publish some of the ones we find most entertaining. (A good selection of these is already available at Gary Novak’s important web site “Worst of the Anti-Mormon Web” [located at http://www.inficad.com/~novak/].) Some of us—not FARMS officially, I hasten to add—are considering the establish-

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40 The “professor” seems to be a composite creation, based (very loosely) on at least three or four quite distinct people. This is, of course, an old and venerable literary technique.
ment of an award for “America’s Funniest Anti-Mormons,” although we certainly welcome international contributions, as well. (If there are enough submissions, perhaps we can open up a new category, like the annual “Foreign Film” Oscar at the Academy Awards.) We have settled on at least two prizes, to be known respectively as the “Korihor” and either the “Philastus” or the “Hurlbut.” The latter titles come from the name of one of the very earliest anti-Mormons, “Doctor Philastus Hurlbut” who, in an eerily prescient move that has since been emulated by several countercult luminaries, carried the name of “Doctor” without ever earning a degree.

Why would we go to such trouble? Simply because we hope to see better anti-Morman writing. We desire an anti-Morman literature that will be yet more creative and entertaining than it has already been. This is a tall order, but, as the dawn of the new millennium draws nigh, who can doubt that the future is bright with promise?

Editor’s Picks

As in previous issues of the Review, I now list my recommendations among the items treated in the present number, accompanied by my own summary ratings of them. I have determined the rankings after reading the reviews published here and after consulting with the relevant reviewers. The final judgments, though, and the ultimate responsibility for them, are mine. This is a subjective undertaking. Here is how my rating system works:

••••• Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely.
••• Enthusiastically recommended.
•• Warmly recommended.
• Recommended.

In this issue of the FARMS Review of Books, I can recommend the following:

•• Keith Edward Tolbert and Eric Pement, The 1996 Directory of Cult and Research Organizations: A Worldwide Listing of 752 Agencies and Individuals. While certainly not for everybody, this is an invaluable
reference work for those interested in the countercult business in general and in the subculture of anti-Mormonism in particular.

* Thomas O. Moore, *A Detailed Chronology of the Book of Mormon.* Many students of the Book of Mormon will find this large chronological chart helpful in following the complex narrative of the book that the uneducated farmboy Joseph Smith supposedly tossed off in a couple of months.

* Keith C. Terry, *Into the Light: A Novel.* While its mixture of fact and fiction can be confusing, *Into the Light* does present some recent Book of Mormon research in a palatable and approachable way.

This number of the *FARMS Review of Books* was to have contained a trio of responses to a very important volume by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson entitled *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1997). Instead, it now appears that we will devote a special issue—a *Sonderausgabe*, as the Germans would call it—to this groundbreaking book. I hope that will appear relatively soon.

I wish to thank all those who have helped in the production of this issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*, especially the reviewers themselves. Shirley Ricks and Alison Coutts have been indispensable, as always, and Melvin J. Thorne has offered useful comments. Emily Johnson, Dan McKinlay, Robyn Patterson, Wendy Thompson, and James Whitaker have rendered able assistance.
A Detailed Chronology of the Book of Mormon is a large (2' x 8.5') plastic-covered wall chart. The details include nearly 540 captions summarizing hundreds of verses of the Book of Mormon, stretching across the main part of the chart in a chronological and geographical design. Time flows from left to right, starting at 600 B.C. and ending at A.D. 420. (Jaredite history is not included.) For about six feet, the upper half of the chart mainly includes a long horizontal color bar representing the northerly city and land of Zarahemla, with short segments of thinner horizontal bars designated for the valley of Gideon, and the lands of Minon, Sidom, Ammonihah, Antionum, Manti, etc. Captions are inserted into and around these color bars. The lower half of the chart is mainly devoted to a large color bar and captions for the promised land and the lands of Nephi, Shilom, Shemlon, Helam, and Amulon, with short segments for the lands of Ishmael, Middoni, Ani-Anti, etc.

Six groups of people are identified by color as well as by location and captions: brown represents the family of Lehi, yellow the Nephites, red the Lamanites, purple the Anti-Nephi-Lehis, green the Mulekites, and gray the robbers. Robbers occupy a thin strip stretching along the chart between the upper and lower halves. On the left, this thin gray strip is called the Narrow Stretch of Wilderness, but on the far right the strip broadens into Mountains, Wilderness, and Secret Places.

Colored arrows zip across the chart from land to land, showing the movement and interaction of various people. When Lamanites are converted and become known as Anti-Nephi-Lehis, the red lands of Nephi, Shilom, and Ishmael gradually turn purple. When Lamanites invade the Nephite land of Manti, the small color bar immediately changes from yellow to red, and then back again when Nephites retake their land.
Scattered across the chart are small graphic devices representing open books of scripture with their own captions: 67 refer to "key doctrinal sections" and 12 identify "historical narratives." On the far left, a large box (set off from the rest of the chart by double lines) contains Thomas O. Moore’s six-paragraph testimony of the Book of Mormon and introduction to the chart. On the far right, another large box (with double lines, rounded corners, and a light blue insert between the lines) contains nearly 60 more captions relating to the Savior’s ministry among Book of Mormon people. Close by this box is a black-and-white sketch of Bertel Thorvaldsen’s statue of Christ.

A small box (drawn with a single line and square corners) contains a six-caption summary of the history of Helaman and the 2,000 young warriors. Two even smaller boxes with square corners contain one caption each and deal with the lands of Mulek and Lehi, and with the calendar change in “9 AD.” Another eleven small boxes (with single lines and rounded corners) present additional history. Seven of the boxes describe battles reported by Alma between 87 and 61 B.C. These boxes enclose between ten and seventeen captions each. The color scheme in these boxes is slightly different from that of the main chart. Another box identifies Book of Mormon record keepers in chronological order. Two more boxes refer to the Nephite annihilation between A.D. 327 and 385; one is small and contains no scriptural citation, but the other contains 22 citations. The last of the round-cornered boxes depicts line graphs purporting to measure the average number of verses in each ten-year period of the 1,020-year chart, subdivided between “historical” and “doctrinal” subjects.

More details include a time line along the bottom of the entire chart, with each century subdivided into ten-year segments. The scale of this long time line is adjustable: many ten-year segments are less than 0.25" long, while the longest (80 to 70 B.C.) requires nearly 16.75" because of the number of captions. Parallel to the long time line is a second line subdivided by the names of books within the Book of Mormon. The books of Omni, Words of Mormon, and Mosiah overlap in their coverage; here the book line separates into three lines. Another long parallel line runs across the bottom of the chart to show the period of time associated with each record keeper.
Brief notes from the author also appear here and there, referring to events or persons mentioned in the captions. For example, one caption says, “Alma departs out of the land and is never heard of more. Al 45:18–19.” Next to this summary, a short yellow arrow points out from the yellow bar. The caption is clear and accurate. The arrow supplies graphic motion. As added detail, a little note appears by the point of this arrow: “ALMA?”

Finally, all these details are enclosed in a box formed with bold double lines and a dark blue insert. With so much information displayed in such a large format, my first impression was of an unwieldy but colorful synchronization of historical and doctrinal detail. When the wall chart is compared with the Book of Mormon Chronology Chart, a small (3.25” x 7.25”) bookmark published more than a decade ago by the church, one notes the general and unmistakable graphic similarities, but they are overwhelmed by the profusion of details packed into the wall chart.

I have not verified every caption and reference. The nature of such a chart—apparently a one-man project to abstract details from a complex work—suggests that errors will occur; several are readily apparent. For example, after 1 B.C., the years are described as “1AD,” “10AD,” etc. This is a common error, an indication of the general lack of understanding of the Dionysian/Gregorian system by which we count solar years. The abbreviation A.D. is grammatically correct when preceding the year number, i.e., Anno Domini 10, in the year of the Lord 10 (A.D. 10).

Lamanites first appear in the chart about 560 B.C. Robbers do not appear until about 300 years later in the Narrow Stretch of Wilderness. No scriptures are cited for the depiction of robbers in 260 B.C. About 279 B.C., the Nephite record keeper Amaron reported that “the more wicked part of the Nephites were destroyed” because “the Lord did visit them in great judgment” (Omni 1:5, 7). Such a destruction need not have come by way of robbers nor would a natural disaster necessarily have created bands of robbers. Lamanite robbers seem to have existed long before 260 B.C. (see Mosiah 10:17; compare 2 Nephi 5:19–25, 34; Jacob 1:1–14; Enos 1:20–25; Jarom 1:5–13; and Omni 1:1–7), but Gadianton robbers do not appear until about 50 B.C. (see Helaman 1–2). The appearance of robbers on the chart around 260 B.C. is not historical.
Between 100 and 92 B.C., the Nephites "began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west" (Mosiah 27:6–7). The yellow arrows associated with these verses only point south, southeast, and southwest.

A similar error is the gradual change of the land of Antionum (see Alma 31:3) from being yellow Nephite to red Lamanite. The caption reads: "The Zoramites become Lamanites. Al 35:8–12; 43:3–4." No arrow connects Antionum with the lands of the Lamanites. The impression given by the chart is that the Zoramites underwent a self-generated metamorphosis. Nonetheless, the Book of Mormon text makes it clear that the Zoramites "began to mix with the Lamanites and to stir them up also to anger" and that "the Zoramites and the Lamanites began to make preparations for war" (Alma 35:10–11). I would have expected to see arrows connecting Antionum with Lamanite lands at this point.

The wall chart represents a level of categorization and summarization that eliminates or perhaps mischaracterizes the actual complexity and detail of the Book of Mormon text. An example of this problem, more striking than misdirected or missing arrows, is the categorization made with the small images of open scriptures. The 67 pictures representing "key doctrinal sections" of the Book of Mormon are scattered across the chart. Are there only 67 "key doctrinal sections" in the Book of Mormon? Of course not. None of the 12 pictures describing "historical narratives" appears before 120 B.C. Are there, in fact, no "historical narratives" in the first 480 years of Book of Mormon history? Of course there are. Then what method of categorization was used to distinguish between "historical narratives" and all the history of the first 480 years? The chart is silent.

This problem also appears in the introductory paragraphs of testimony and description and in the small line graphs that purportedly depict the number of Book of Mormon verses characterized by "doctrinal" and "historical" subject matter. According to the second introductory paragraph, more than 42 percent of the verses in the Book of Mormon are historical. How was that conclusion reached? The chart again is silent.

In general, history is a recorded account of things that were perceived to have happened. Doctrine consists of a statement of
principles, tenets, and beliefs. In the Book of Mormon, the two are often intertwined. For example, Alma 60 contains 36 verses, including the words of Moroni’s letter to Pahoran, the governor. The letter may look like 36 historical verses. However, in Alma 60:13, a verse that is integral to the accompanying discourse, Moroni presents the doctrine of the war-afflicted righteous: “For the Lord suffereth the righteous to be slain that his justice and judgment may come upon the wicked; therefore ye need not suppose that the righteous are lost because they are slain; but behold, they do enter into the rest of the Lord their God.” How many verses of Alma 60 fall into the doctrinal discourse associated with this clearly doctrinal verse, and how many verses are simply historical narrative? I suppose a decision-making protocol could be established, but I do not know what the ultimate point would be.

I also do not want to draw too much attention to the question of the appropriate level of summarization. That issue is part of any chart, map, or graph used to simplify a more complex set of data. To his credit, the author has attempted to address the problem in the fourth paragraph of the introduction:

The purpose of this work is to serve as a tool in learning and understanding the Book of Mormon. It is not intended, and should not be used, to replace a serious and personal study of the Book of Mormon. This work provides a means to visualize and track the complex interactions between Book of Mormon people. It also aligns the parallel histories in such a way that any person can follow each of these histories without getting lost in the complexity of the record. (emphasis added)

My more serious disagreement with the chart is not so much the question of the appropriate level of detail and summarization, as it is the title’s claim that the chart represents a “detailed chronology” of the Book of Mormon. The chart is detailed, but the chronology is not. A “detailed chronology” could be expected to include three elements: (a) measurements of actual time periods, (b) accurate dating of historical events, and (c) an arrangement of such events in the order of their occurrence. The chart is based on assumed time periods and dates that have been arranged in an
approximate order. The chart is a general chronological arrangement of summaries of Book of Mormon events associated with assumed dates.

I understand that the chart’s title was designed to sell the product, so that it could be distributed into locations where it might be used. The title is intriguing for those interested in Book of Mormon details. There may be many Latter-day Saints who could benefit from hanging the chart on a wall, carefully examining the flow of history indicated by the chart, and noting those places where the chart’s summarization does not fully capture the historical details. However, the chart is not truly a “detailed chronology.” Given the current state of Book of Mormon chronology, it is unlikely that the author could have created a “detailed chronology,” especially in chart form.

The topic of Book of Mormon chronology bears more than a superficial resemblance to the subject of Book of Mormon geography. Indeed, the two go hand in hand because events must happen somewhere at some time. According to John L. Sorenson, the subject of Book of Mormon geography has prompted three distinct responses. “On the part of Church authorities caution . . . has prevailed. For a minority of members the reaction has been persistent curiosity. Meanwhile a large majority have been satisfied to ignore the matter.”

That the attitudes of the curious and the satisfied are generally the same with regard to the topic of Book of Mormon chronology hardly needs noting. However, the church’s response to chronology is singularly different from its stance on Book of Mormon geography. The church publishes a chronology in the Book of Mormon, apparently with the intention that the dates given in brackets will help with the study of the Book of Mormon.

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2 President Gordon B. Hinckley has expressed this sense of assistance: “The evidence for [the Book of Mormon’s] truth, for its validity in a world prone to demand evidence, lies not in archaeology or anthropology, though these may be helpful to some. It lies not in word research or historical analysis, though these may be confirmatory. The evidence for its truth lies in reading it. It is a book of God.” As quoted in “Viewpoint,” *Church News*, 6 January 1996, 16; see also the lower headline on p.1: “Chronology chart helps with study of Book of Mormon—pages 8–9.”
The introduction to the Book of Mormon declares: "The record gives an account of two great civilizations. One came from Jerusalem in 600 B.C., and afterward separated into two nations, known as the Nephites and the Lamanites." The introductory page entitled "A Brief Explanation about the Book of Mormon" supports the earlier chronological assertion by referring to "The Plates of Brass brought by the people of Lehi from Jerusalem in 600 B.C." The ending of Book of Mormon history is described on the same page in somewhat less absolute terms: "In or about the year A.D. 421, Moroni, the last of the Nephite prophet-historians, sealed the sacred record and hid it up unto the Lord."

At the bottom of each page of the Book of Mormon, historical dates are set within brackets. For example, on page three, 1 Nephi 2:4 reads: "And it came to pass that he *departed into the wilderness." The asterisk refers to the date given in brackets at the bottom of the page: "[*600 B.C.]". The note to this verse cites two scriptures as a basis for determining this date. First Nephi 10:4 reports: "Yea, even six hundred years from the time that my father left Jerusalem, a prophet would the Lord God raise up among the Jews—even a Messiah, or, in other words, a Savior of the world." According to 1 Nephi 19:8: "And behold he cometh, according to the words of the angel, in six hundred years from the time my father left Jerusalem."

These scriptures might justify the date of 600 B.C. if one assumes that the scriptures refer to 600 solar years and the birth of Jesus occurred in A.D. 1. However, other scriptures provide equally credible evidence about the actual departure date of Lehi from Jerusalem. Lehi appears to have been called as a prophet at Jerusalem "in the commencement of the first year of the reign of Zedekiah, king of Judah" (1 Nephi 1:4). According to the Babylonian Chronicles, biblical history (see 2 Kings 24:10-18; 2 Chronicles 36:5-11), and accurate dating of an eclipse in the fifth year of Nabopolassar's reign, 597 B.C. was the year

4 Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadrezzar, came to the throne of Babylon on 23/24 November (Julian) 626 B.C. and died on 15/16 August (Julian) 605 B.C. Jack Finegan, Handbook of Biblical Chronology (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 199–201. According to Ptolemy's Almagest, trans. and
Zedekiah’s reign began. Thus Lehi was probably called as a prophet in 597 B.C., but not later than 596 B.C.

When Lehi’s sons and the family of Ishmael were traveling south from the land of Jerusalem, a furious argument occurred when part of the group wanted to return to Jerusalem (see 1 Nephi 7:1–21). Nephi sought to convince the backsliders that Jerusalem would be destroyed (clear evidence that the city had not yet been destroyed). As part of his argument, Nephi prophesied of the coming destruction and reminded his brothers that Zedekiah and his supporters had “rejected the prophets, and Jeremiah have they cast into prison” (1 Nephi 7:14).

The second Babylonian siege of Jerusalem began in January 588 B.C. (see 2 Kings 25:1; Jeremiah 39:1; 52:4; and Ezekiel

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5 The Babylonian Chronicles provide the date of Nabopolassar’s death (8 Abu in his 21st year, the equivalent of our 15/16 August [Julian] 605 B.C.) and the date of Nebuchadrezzar’s accession to the throne (1 Ululu, the equivalent of 6/7 September [Julian] 605 B.C.). With 1 Ululu, Nebuchadrezzar began his accession period. The first official year of his reign began with the lunar month of the New Year Festival, Nisanu, which began on 1/2 April (Julian) 604 B.C. The Babylonian Chronicles also provide the date when Nebuchadrezzar seized the city of Jerusalem and took its king into captivity (2 Addan in Nebuchadrezzar’s seventh regnal year, the equivalent of 15/16 March [Julian] 597 B.C.). Zedekiah was chosen to be Nebuchadrezzar’s vassal shortly after the capture of Jerusalem in March 597 B.C. and perhaps before the first large group of exiles left the city in April 597 B.C. Wiseman, Chronicles, 26–28, 33; Finegan, Handbook, 29–33, 198–212; Richard A. Parker and Waldo H. Dubberstein, Babylonian Chronology 626 B.C.—A.D. 75 (Providence: Brown University Press, 1956), 27–28; Edwin R. Thiele, The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings, 3rd ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1983), 182–92; Abraham Malamat, “The Last Kings of Judah and the Fall of Jerusalem,” Israel Exploration Journal 18 (1968): 137–50; K. S. Freedy and Donald B. Redford, “The Dates in Ezekiel in Relation to Biblical, Babylonian and Egyptian Sources,” Journal of the American Oriental Society 90 (1970): 462–68, 484.
24:1–2). However, the Babylonian army withdrew from the city to battle the Egyptian army near the seashore. According to Jeremiah 37, the prophet’s incarceration occurred as he attempted to leave Jerusalem, during the period when the Babylonian siege was withdrawn. The time of these events can be estimated from dates given in Ezekiel 29:1–16; 30:20–26; 31:1–18. If one assumes that Ezekiel’s dates refer to the actual events, then the siege of Jerusalem was lifted from January to June 587 B.C. If one assumes that Ezekiel’s dates refer to the time when he heard the news in Babylonia, where he was in exile, then the siege may have been withdrawn perhaps as early as August 588 B.C. to January 587 B.C. Thus the dissension among Lehi’s and Ishmael’s families occurred more than eight years after Zedekiah’s appointment by Nebuchadrezzar and Lehi’s calling as a prophet.

In 2 Nephi 25:9–10, Nephi explicitly clarifies his understanding and refers to his prophecy to his brothers during their argument in the desert (see 1 Nephi 7:13) to the effect that Jerusalem was to be destroyed “immediately after my father left Jerusalem” (2 Nephi 25:10). The Babylonian army returned to Jerusalem sometime between January and June 587 B.C. (depending on when one assumes the siege was withdrawn). The siege was undertaken with ferocity and resolve, the walls were breached in July 586 B.C., and the wrecked city and corpses were burned in August 586 B.C. (see 2 Kings 25:2–10). Nephi’s understanding

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8 Freedy and Redford, “The Dates in Ezekiel,” 470–72, 484. Jeremiah was in prison during Zedekiah’s tenth regnal year (October 588 to 587 B.C.) and Nebuchadrezzar’s eighteenth regnal year (April 587 to 586 B.C.; see Jeremiah 32:1–2). Thus the events of Jeremiah’s imprisonment in Jeremiah 32 may have occurred between April and October 587 B.C. Freedy and Redford, “The Dates in Ezekiel,” 467; Parker and Dubberstein, *Babylonian Chronology*, 28.
was exact. Jeremiah called upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem to leave the city and go to the Babylonians when the siege was lifted (Jeremiah 38:2). Lehi, whose life was in danger, left only after being commanded by the Lord to do so (see 1 Nephi 2:1–3). All this suggests that Lehi’s escape occurred in the latter part of 588 B.C. or the beginning of 587 B.C.

If that is the case, then a 12- or 13-year discrepancy is apparent between the generally helpful 600 B.C. date set forth in the Book of Mormon and the more likely historical date. Does this mean that the historical approach contradicts Lehi’s 600-year prophecy? Of course not. The question is not whether Lehi’s 600-year prophecy was fulfilled. The Book of Mormon records its fulfillment (see 3 Nephi 1:1–21). The Book of Mormon is true. The question is how Lehi’s 600-year prophecy was fulfilled. That question and its possible answers are just the sorts of things one would expect to find in a “detailed chronology” of the Book of Mormon.

I have attempted elsewhere to outline the issues relevant to a “detailed chronology” of the Book of Mormon and to suggest some plausible answers to such issues. I recognize that the questions and answers in a “detailed chronology” are not important for the vast majority of Latter-day Saints who have spiritual testimonies and whose interests do not include historical detail. Such questions and answers are not matters around which a spiritual testimony of the Book of Mormon is built.

Nor is there any reason for church authorities to be anything but cautious. Wise, they have recognized the limits of intellectual inquiry. Those limits are fluid because tools of discovery and sources of information change. With such fluidity, the perception of necessary questions and possible answers can also change. The

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Book of Mormon needs no official chronology beyond the general dates already supplied.

Today, no "detailed chronology" exists for the Book of Mormon. The wall chart prepared by Thomas O. Moore is not a "detailed chronology." We can congratulate the author for his individual work and persistence. We may use the chart to make our own reading of the Book of Mormon more visually stimulating and, perhaps, more successful. But we must recognize that the time line at the bottom of the chart is not the time line of a "detailed chronology" of the Book of Mormon, nor are the dates given in the chart necessarily accurate.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

"Shall They Not Both Fall into the Ditch?"
What Certain Baptists Think They Know about the Restored Gospel

’Taint what a man don’t know that hurts him, it’s what he knows that just ain’t so.

Frank McKinney Hubbard

A series of editorials in the Baptist Religious Herald is especially revealing. The April 9 issue for 1840 has an editorial under the heading "The Mormons": "A correspondent requests information as to the peculiar tenets of this modern sect. We have never seen a copy of the book of Mormon, nor any abstract of their creed upon which we could fully rely, as a fair exposition of their opinions." This frank admission does not, however, preclude a summary verdict: "The book of Mormon is a bungling and stupid production. . . . It contains some trite, moral maxims, but the phraseology . . .

This review reflects the personal opinions of its author. It was not commissioned by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, nor does it claim to represent the official view of the church on any issue. I am grateful to Deborah Peterson for her help in gathering materials for this review, and to Malin Jacobs, Steve Mayfield, Eugene Seaich, and John A. Tvedtines for assistance on specific questions.
frequently violates every principle and rule of grammar. We have no hesitation in saying the whole system is erroneous.”

“Don’t be puzzled by Mormons,” reads the glossy poster. “Be prepared.” Against a background of hundreds of jigsaw puzzle pieces, the poster announces a program entitled “The Mormon Puzzle: Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints.” Date, time, and place of the program are to be filled in by the local administrators of the program.

According to a February 1998 Associated Press article, 45,000 kits for this program, which include the poster, had been distributed by the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) since the materials became available last year. Nearly 38,000 have been disseminated to Southern Baptist churches across North America. The rest, presumably, have gone to interested individuals. The kit has been created in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention’s plan to hold its 1998 annual national meeting in (of all places) Salt Lake City, Utah, in early June. In February 1998, Jim Harding, executive director of the Utah-Idaho SBC, called upon Baptists everywhere to pray intensely for the success of the meeting, along with the evangelistic efforts and church mission trips to Utah that will accompany it. For the Salt Lake City meeting, he told the SBC’s Executive Committee in Nashville, Tennessee, is much more than a mere convention. It is “a divine appointment.”

The “Introduction and Instructional Guide” that accompanies the materials suggests that “pastors,” “education ministers,” and various other “study leaders” consider using them in small group discussions or in large classes, on Sunday or on Wednesday evenings or in a concentrated six-to-ten-hour retreat over one or two days (for which sample schedules are provided), or that

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individuals be encouraged to use them for private study.4 “Materials in this package are designed to assist discerning Christians trying to put together the puzzle of Mormonism. These materials will equip them to be more effective witnesses to the true gospel of Jesus Christ to any Mormons they may encounter.”5

The package consists of several items:

- First is a brief survey of the enclosed materials, entitled “The Mormon Puzzle: Introduction and Instructional Guide.”
- The most ambitious item in the package is described in the “Introduction and Instructional Guide” as a fifty-minute video (it is actually substantially longer), entitled The Mormon Puzzle: Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints.6 According to its accompanying materials, it “provides in-depth evaluations by Christian scholars and experts who provide practical ways for effective Christian witness to Mormons.”7 Says the video’s narrator, “Let’s put the puzzle together, piece by piece.” (One of the experts is Mike Gray, pastor of Southeast Baptist Church in Salt Lake City, who told the Baptists’ Denominational Summit on Mormonism, held on 27–28 June 1997 in Ridgecrest, North Carolina, that the state of Utah is “a stronghold of Satan.”)8
- Next is a manual, The Mormon Puzzle: Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, designed for personal study or for group instruction. It is divided into five lessons.9
- Another small manual, “written by a team of knowledgeable writers,” “compares and contrasts LDS beliefs and practices to those of historic Christianity and evaluates them in light of biblical

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5 Ibid.
7 “Introduction and Instructional Guide.”
It is entitled *The Mormon Puzzle: The Challenge of Mormonism*. The back cover identifies its authors as "prominent Christian experts." "We have attempted to call on people from around the country with the highest integrity in interfaith witness and counter-cult ministries." "We hope," writes its editor, Michael H. Reynolds, "that the information in this book will aid in understanding that Mormonism is not Christian." (Note that, for Reynolds and his fellow "experts," the non-Christian character of Latter-day Saint faith isn't an argument to be made or a conclusion to be reached. It is a fact, an objective reality, to be recognized and understood.)

10 "Introduction and Instructional Guide."


12 In Reynolds, *The Challenge of Mormonism*, v. In fact, the book is largely the creation of a certain bloc of notorious, professional, fundamentalist anti-Mormons, including the colorful Thelma "Granny" Geer and the then-staff of Oklahoma-based Utah Missions, Inc. It has many of the same kinds of grammatical and other errors that readers of UMI's monthly *Evangel* have come to know and love. For instance, are there "nearly 50,000 Mormon missionaries out there" (p. v), or "more than 50,000 full-time missionaries" (p. 22)? With a few others at Brigham Young University, I have had several bouts of frustrating and astoundingly unpleasant correspondence with contributor Robert McKay and the book's editor, Michael H. Reynolds. McKay and Reynolds lost their jobs at UMI in 1997. John L. Smith continues on as "director emeritus." Rev. Smith claims to have studied at Brigham Young University (p. 82), but it would seem that his "study" was limited to a three-week church history tour, in 1957, in a Greyhound bus. See his unintentionally entertaining autobiography, *The Extraordinary Life and Ministry of an Ordinary Preacher!* (Marlow, Okla.: Utah Missions, 1997), which certainly cannot be accused of understating his achievements. There is no record of his ever having enrolled in a course at Brigham Young University. Another contributor is J. E. Cook, who "has an earned doctorate" from some sort of school in some sort of field called "Comparative Theology of the Cults." Presumably, this "earned doctorate" is to be distinguished from the bogus doctorates that are so common in careerist anti-Mormon circles (e.g., those of Walter Martin and Dee Jay Nelson). Tal Davis, yet another writer of the booklet, is also said to have "earned" a doctorate. By contrast, see Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, *They Lie in Wait to Deceive* (Mesa, Ariz.: Brownsworth, 1995), 4:129-45, for "Dr." John L. Smith's "doctorate" and related matters.

• "The Mormon Puzzle: Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity" contains a detailed "point-by-point comparison of historic Christian doctrines with those officially stated by the LDS Church."14

• The brochure "Belief Bulletin: Mormons" offers a one-paragraph summary of Latter-day Saint history and briefly surveys several "Major Beliefs" of the church, taking care to follow each one with a "Biblical Response."15

• "Patterns in the Cults" purports to survey the commonalities that "cults" share, as opposed to true religion. Of course, the notion that a group of religions can be termed "cults" because of their shared attributes is a highly problematic one. It naively fails to take into account "the constructed, artificial, and highly malleable nature of categories like heresy and orthodoxy."16 One can, in fact, mount a serious argument that the term cult, in the sense used by these materials, is so vague and so manifestly pejorative that it should be retired as simply useless.17

• Francis J. Beckwith's "A Closer Look at the Mormon Concept of God" draws on the kinds of arguments that Beckwith, with a colleague named Stephen Parrish, advanced some years ago in a book entitled The Mormon Concept of God.18 That book drew heavy criticism from Latter-day Saint thinkers.19

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14 "Introduction and Instructional Guide."
15 "Belief Bulletin: Mormons" (Alpharetta, Ga.: Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, 1997).
16 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 76.
• Also included is “A Closer Look at the Mormon Plan of Salvation.”20 This pamphlet “delineates the LDS dual concepts of salvation (resurrection) and eternal life (exaltation) and the legalistic plan Mormons believe is necessary to attain them. It contrasts these beliefs with the biblical concept of salvation by grace through faith alone.”21

• The most famous peculiarly Latter-day Saint volume of scripture is quickly disposed of by the Southern Baptist Convention in a little brochure entitled “A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon.”22

• The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints enjoys a reputation for successfully cultivating and encouraging strong family relationships among its members. The Southern Baptist Convention attempts to neutralize the attractiveness of this reputation in “A Closer Look at the Truth about the Mormon Family.”23 “The LDS church projects an image of fostering ideal wholesome families that are intended to last forever. This pamphlet analyzes the unbiblical theological reasons why the LDS emphasizes [sic] family issues and exposes the all too human realities of Mormon family life.”24

According to the Associated Press, Philip Roberts, who is the director of the Interfaith Witness Team for the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, says that the Baptists sought an “objective look” at the differences between Mormonism and conservative Protestantism. That, he explained, is

21 “Introduction and Instructional Guide.”
24 “Introduction and Instructional Guide.” One might have expected, from this characterization, a revealing exposé of the fact that, despite their alleged claim to be perfect, Mormons are, well, not. Such polemic is very popular among precisely the anti-Mormon circles that played a leading role in the creation of these materials. Oddly, though, “The Truth about the Mormon Family” never goes that route and thus never really delivers the sordid details on “the all too human realities of Mormon family life.”
the reason they filmed scholars from Brigham Young University on video, along with believing Mormons from other walks of life: to lay out the doctrines of the church.25

And indeed, even for one of the authors of the SBC materials the “Mormon Puzzle” video is entirely too nice to the Latter-day Saints. In early April 1998, a Denver-area member of the church received the set of Mormon Puzzle materials he had ordered. Included in his kit was a note from Rev. John L. Smith written on the letterhead of Utah Missions, Inc., entitled “To Anyone Planning to Show The Mormon Puzzle to a Group Of People” and marked “Read This First.” The note runs as follows:

The beginning of this film is Great! I marvel that BYU professors would be so willing to present such teachings to a Christian audience!

Even BYU Professor Dr. Stephen E. Robinson, the infamous author of Are Mormons Christian? and Mormon Co-author of How Wide The Divide? comes out with the plain but unbiblical teachings about God that Mormons seldom mention in the presence of non-Mormons. That portion of the video is Great! Great! Great!

However, almost at the end of the film two Mormon families are shown in a “Family Home Evening” situation. They come across in a very positive, wholesome manner.

Thus, it is my fear (after almost 50 years of intensive interest in the subject), that out of 100 people in any Christian congregation—several would relate to those events in a way complimentary to Mormonism—and directly contrary to the purpose of the film.

Therefore, if I were showing this film to my congregation—I would stop the film well before these scenes!

See the film yourself (I would stop it just before the fellow with the mustache and red tie, Herb Stone­man, begins his statement about 50 minutes into the film). Of course it is your prerogative to do as you

25 Moulton, “20,000 Baptists Prepare for Polite Scrutiny of LDS Beliefs.”
choose. I believe the remainder of the film will be counter-productive to your intentions.

The film is really too long to show in most services. It could easily be stopped short of the end and not take the chance of harming the relationship of some in most congregations! Some new Christians, as well as those uninformed about Mormonism, may well respond in a way that you do not intend.

I hope you will take my advice!

Sincerely,

[signed] John L. Smith

But is the video really "objective"? Do the curriculum materials provided by the Southern Baptist Convention for its people really offer an unbiased look (let alone a positive or flattering one) at the faith of the Latter-day Saints? Scarcely. Yes, Stephen Robinson, the chairman of the Department of Ancient Scripture at Brigham Young University at the time of filming, and Robert Millet, the dean of Religious Education, do appear several times in the video. But Phil Roberts and Sandra Tanner are always there to critique, to show how illogical and unbiblical and outrageous Latter-day Saint doctrine is. The Mormons are allowed merely to state their beliefs; the anti-Mormons are then unleashed to assault them. The bibliography of "Suggested Readings" given at the end of Michael H. Reynolds's Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends cites only polemical materials critical of the Latter-day Saints and their faith. Not a single item by a Latter-day Saint makes the list, nor does a single serious historical work, nor does any other scholarly book. This is still, admittedly, a huge advance over earlier productions by critics of the church. Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints is neither hateful, paranoid, nor sensationalistic, as is Ed Decker's infamous pseudo-documentary film The God Makers. (Happily, Decker and his cronies are absent from these materials.)

Nonetheless, although far more subtle, the old familiar hostility continues to be apparent. The Mormon Puzzle material is

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26 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 30.
intended not only to warn conservative Protestants against accepting the restored gospel, but also to help Latter-day Saints "to realize the mirage of Mormonism and to receive the true Christ."27 The declared purpose of this material, according to the video, is to prevent people from being "entangled in the Mormon net," for Latter-day Saints worship merely a "god" with a small "g."28 Thelma Geer, sounding like a writer of nineteenth-century anti-Mormon melodrama, even offers up a chapter on "the deep dark secrets of Mormonism."29 Her chapter assaults the Book of Mormon and the book of Abraham. Sandra Tanner dismisses Joseph Smith, the revered founder of the faith of the Latter-day Saints, as "something of a scoundrel."30 (By contrast, the great and astonishingly erudite German scholar Max Weber, one of the principal creators of modern social science, thought that Joseph Smith "resembled, even in matters of detail, Muhammad and above all the Jewish prophets.")31 And, although she would be extremely hard pressed to find a single passage anywhere saying so, Ms. Tanner confidently tells her video audience that Brigham Young "said that Adam was the God we pray to."

Baptists studying these materials are taught to treat their Latter-day Saint neighbors with suspicion and with what many of those neighbors will surely regard as disrespect. When dealing with Mormon missionaries, for instance, Baptists are advised to "Try to determine their first names and refrain from calling them 'elder' whenever possible."32 In speaking with a Latter-day Saint, "Be careful not to call his or her testimony Christian."33 After all, Mormons belong to a "cult."34 And, although they are smitten with "their own spiritual superiority,"35 they are, at

27 Ibid., 3.
28 Ibid., 17, 25.
30 For a very different view, by an eminent American historian, see Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984).
32 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 9.
33 Ibid., 19, emphasis in the original.
34 Ibid., 11, 24.
35 Ibid., 12.
bottom, typically evasive, illogical, and intellectually dishonest. You just can’t trust ’em.

“Regardless of what the Mormon missionaries or television commercials say, the Mormon church is anti-Christian,” writes Robert McKay.36 “The Jesus of Mormonism,” announces John L. Smith, “was not born of a virgin (though Mormons will say he was).”37 “It should be clear that from what Mormons say concerning the Bible . . . they have a very low opinion of it,” reports Michael Reynolds. “In public they claim the Bible is authoritative and in practice they quote from it. Yet they obviously do not believe it.”38 The video, too, operates on this assumption that Latter-day Saint spokesmen habitually misrepresent their own beliefs. For instance, in a brief, featured comment on the conception of Jesus, Brigham Young University’s Robert Millet declares that “how that was accomplished, we don’t know”; however, the narrator waits only a few minutes before confidently telling his audience that Mormons believe Jesus to have been conceived through “God’s literal, physical relationship with Mary.” So deep and, indeed, so paranoid is the suspicion of Mormons that pervades these materials that, in recounting Joseph Smith’s story, one writer in The Challenge of Mormonism cannot even bring himself to admit that Joseph Smith claimed to have had a first vision. Apparently, he only claimed to claim to have one, for Lavoid Robertson rather oddly refers to “his first ‘alleged’ encounter with messengers of God.”39

Habitual dishonesty, however, is not the only trait characteristic of the Latter-day Saint personality. “In trying to witness to Mormons, one frustrating problem is their tendency to change the subject,” says Michael Reynolds. “Whenever you get to a difficult place, they wish to alter the conversation to suit themselves.”40 Of course, they have little choice. For “they are ignorant of what the Bible actually says and of sound principles of biblical interpretation.”41 “Anyone that knows their [sic] Bible

36 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 68.
37 In ibid., 5.
38 In ibid., 53.
40 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 12.
41 Ibid., 17.
cannot be converted into Mormonism,” reports an anti-Mormon featured in the video. “No matter how practical a Mormon is,” says Reynolds, “he or she does not rely on rationality when it comes to his or her faith.”42

In view of their manifold idiocies and depravities, as portrayed in the Mormon Puzzle material, the Latter-day Saints are ripe for judgment. And the Southern Baptist Convention hastens to pronounce it. “People who follow the gospel of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” says the video narrator, “will walk a path which will lead to eternal condemnation. . . . Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not biblical Christians, and [are] therefore lost.” “Mormon people are lost people,” says a videotaped “soulwinner,” comparing them in their deception to similar categories of the lost, such as “drug addicts,” “drunkards,” and other sinners. A major portion of the video features an attractive Latter-day Saint family who are shown reading the scriptures and singing hymns during a family night. The Leathams, who live only a few miles from Salt Lake City, apparently opened up their home to the Southern Baptist film crew. They are a friendly, and obviously loving, family. The Leatham children are adorable. No matter—their doom is assured. “Unless we present to them the true gospel of the Bible,” observes the narrator, “they will be lost for eternity.”

The Mormon Puzzle material deals in gross overstatement. Purportedly designed to increase the understanding of one faith by the adherents of another, this approach is sadly irresponsible. “Putting the pieces of the Mormon puzzle together, one by one,” the narrator of the SBC video hyperbolically remarks, “a picture of a faith emerges which has very little if anything in common with biblical Christian faith.” “Little if anything”? One might have thought that shared belief in a benevolent personal God who answers prayers, common acceptance of all the narratives of both the Old and New Testaments, and parallel professions of trust in Jesus of Nazareth as the redeeming Son of God whose atoning sacrifice opens the way to salvation, to mention just a few noteworthy items, would count for something.

42 Ibid., 8.
In the eyes of Michael Reynolds, Robert McKay, John L. Smith, and their associates, however, such things count for nothing. “Mormonism is like a complex puzzle,” says one of their leaflets. “To most people, its beliefs and practices are difficult to fit together in a coherent system.”43 Most people, of course, know little or nothing about the restored Church of Jesus Christ, and we would expect them to have some difficulty. It should be the intent of materials like these to assist them in understanding. It is disheartening, therefore, to see that the chosen experts of the Southern Baptist Convention understand so little of a faith that millions regard as simply profound, logical, consistent, and deeply satisfying. The great Victorian explorer and linguist Sir Richard Burton—who entered Mecca in disguise, translated the 1001 Nights and various manuscripts from ancient India, and pursued the source of the Nile—wrote following his lengthy stay in Salt Lake City that “there is in Mormondom, as in all other exclusive faiths, . . . an inner life into which I cannot flatter myself or deceive the reader with the idea of my having penetrated.”44 Sir Richard was a brilliant and accomplished ethnographer, armed with a passion for understanding and hobbled by very few prejudices. What chance was there that professional anti-Mormons such as Reynolds, McKay, and Smith would be able to get it right?

As an example of the “in-depth evaluations by Christian scholars and experts” included in the Mormon Puzzle video, one could do worse than choose an item from the professional anti-Mormon publicist Sandra Tanner: “Mormonism,” she declares to her interviewer,

is truly a different religion. It isn’t just a brand of Christianity. Its theology is so radically different that it is [she pauses]. . . Its theology is as close to Christianity as Hinduism. It’s a totally different view of man and God and creation. Everything about it is different. They just use the same terms.45

43 “Introduction and Instructional Guide.”
45 Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints. Ms. Tanner has a propensity to make outlandish statements. To the SBC’s 1997 Denominational
This is not a serious statement from a serious scholar. It is hyperbolic to the point of embarrassment. Mormonism is "totally different" from Christianity? Do the Latter-day Saints not believe in a personal God? Do they not believe in the narratives of the Bible? Don't Latter-day Saints believe that Jesus Christ is God's divine Son, who rose from the dead on the third day and in whom alone salvation is possible? (The list of agreements could be extended all day long.) Do Hindus believe any of these things? It is very unlikely that Sandra Tanner knows enough about Hinduism to entitle her to make such a remark, and her bizarre comment suggests that her understanding of Mormonism may itself be little deeper. As I have remarked elsewhere,

One would very much like to pose a few questions to Ms. Tanner: What, for example, is the role of the Vedas or of the Upanishads in Latter-day Saint devotions? How central is the concept of karma to Mormon theology? What have the leaders of the church had to say about reincarnation, or the transmigration of souls? Is there any passage in Mormon scripture that advocates a rigid and complex caste system? Has an atheistic form of Mormonism, analogous to the Hindu atheist movements, been a fruitful element in Latter-day Saint intellectual history? Which is closer to Hindu monistic teaching, the Mormon concept of the Godhead or classical post-Nicene trinitarianism? Can Ms. Tanner name any Latter-day Saint hymn devoted to Vishnu? Would she care to comment on the rising bhakti movement among the followers of Joseph Smith? On the chanting

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Summit on Mormonism, in North Carolina, she said, "There is a racial ceiling in the [LDS] church and non-whites can only advance so far. This is a white man's church and if it continues to grow to [sic] non-whites, they're going to realize it." See Martin King, "Mormon Summit Preps for '98 SBC; Notes Christian, LDS differences," Baptist Press (2 July 1997) (www.religiontoday.com). Presumably the irony of her making such remarks to the Southern Baptist Convention—is anybody curious why there is a Southern Baptist Convention?—escaped Ms. Tanner.
of saffron-robed Mormon missionaries at American airports? (Hare Joseph!)\(^{46}\)

(As of yet—and these questions have been in print and available for many months—I have had no answer from Ms. Tanner. Perhaps she is still working her way through Whitney’s *Sanskrit Grammar* or Stenzler’s *Elementarbuch der Sanskritsprache*, and prefers to delay her response until she has a more secure command of the primary sources.\(^{47}\) I can sympathize. My copies of Stenzler and Whitney have lain largely untouched for years. Sanskrit is a difficult and intimidating language. Ms. Tanner can take whatever time she needs. I can wait. I am waiting.) Members of the Southern Baptist Convention who have been taught this sort of thing in Sunday School classes and church retreats have been victimized. Their trust in their teachers and pastors has been abused. Unfortunately, as we shall see, although little in the Mormon Puzzle material reaches quite the level of Ms. Tanner’s zany remark, there is much, very much, in these items that misleads and misinforms. Anyone whose grasp of Mormonism relies solely on the materials provided by the Southern Baptist Convention will find the Mormon “puzzle” impossibly difficult to solve. Too many pieces are missing, too many seem to belong in another box altogether, and far too many have been cut and reshaped by a hostile Protestant saw.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may well be surprised and perplexed that one church would devote its official resources to assaulting another. There is nothing remotely comparable among the Mormons. I teach Islamic studies at Brigham Young University, and I often lecture on Islam to Latter-day Saint groups across the country. I have written a book about Islam, directed to a Latter-day Saint audience, and have participated in other efforts of the kind.\(^{48}\) I have been involved in


Mormon-Muslim dialogues at Brigham Young and Idaho State universities, and in “trialogues” between Jews, Christians, and Muslims in Austria and Israel. Never have I been asked to concentrate on the “errors” and “evils” of Islam, nor have I ever felt the slightest pressure from anybody to do so. Quite the contrary. I have sought always to treat the religion of the Muslims with sympathy and respect, and my efforts to do so have been well received at every level of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

To the best of my knowledge, not a single Latter-day Saint makes his or her living as a professional critic of anybody else’s faith. We don’t run anti-Protestant “ministries.” We don’t have a Sunday School curriculum focused on the errors of the Baptists. No Mormon tabloids exist that aim at refuting Calvinism. We don’t buy or sell books with titles like Forty Years an Evangelical Slave. We don’t produce sensationalistic videos devoted to attacking Protestant fundamentalism. I have never seen a Latter-day Saint cartoon lampooning, say, the Assemblies of God. We don’t flit around the world trying to disrupt the work of other religious organizations. We don’t picket them when they dedicate new buildings. We don’t haunt their meetings. We don’t distribute leaflets assaulting other faiths. We don’t sponsor lectures or seminars in our chapels assaulting the “evils” of our neighbors’ religions, and we don’t have television and radio programs “exposing” the stupidity or depravity of others’ beliefs.

Latter-day Saints can, I think, be quite happy that this is so.

The Mormons’ Deceptive Campaign

A recurrent theme of the SBC material is the insistence that Latter-day Saints are not only deceived, but deceivers. Thus, for example, Ken James says that natural human desires to do
something for departed loved ones are "exploited craftily by Mormonism" with its doctrine of salvation for the dead. The video Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints notes that the Mormons are "maintaining a very carefully crafted image" and, later, that their radio and television spots are "carefully crafted." "They present themselves in a Christian veneer," says the "Introduction and Instructional Guide." They "operate an extensive public relations campaign . . . designed to promote the image of a traditional Christian church," says the video, and are "striving to be seen as just another Christian denomination."

"In the recent past," says Michael Reynolds, "the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . . has claimed to be Christian." He thereby manages artfully to insinuate, without actually asserting, that Latter-day Saints did not claim to be Christian in the less recent past. (His failure to say so explicitly presumably relieves him of any obligation to provide evidence for his insinuation.) Robert McKay concurs, pointing out that "the LDS church claims today to be part of the Christian religion . . . [although] the two are in fact entirely separate religions." And Tal Davis sounds the same theme. "In recent years," he writes, "the LDS has [sic] portrayed itself as a Christian denomination with a few distinctive emphases. Christian theologians, however, know that Mormonism is essentially different in its basic theological structure from that of historic Christianity."

And when did this deceptive campaign commence? The SBC's experts have precise answers. Michael Reynolds says that it is "in the last 20 years or so The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) has made a concerted effort to appear Christian"—by means of, among other things, "a redefinition of some LDS terms." Lavoid Robertson explains that "Mormons have changed 'in appearance' in the last fifteen years, seeking acceptance by mainline Christianity." "In the last twelve years or so," declares Phil Roberts in the SBC video, "the Church of

49 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 48.
50 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 3.
51 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 23.
52 Davis, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon."
54 Robertson, "Introduction," in ibid., vii.
Latter-day Saints has become very public-relations conscious. They want to be thought of, not as a cult, not as a sectarian group, but as mainstream Protestants.”

The nefarious scheme seems to be working. Several times during the video, people in the street give their unrehearsed opinions of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. To the obvious horror of the video’s producers, these people manifest an unacceptably positive—or, at least, nonadversarial—view of the Mormons. One man goes so far as to say that “those who follow Christ and his teachings are Christians,” and then applies this to the Latter-day Saints. Needless to say, such opinions must be eliminated.

Part of this shifty campaign to convince their neighbors that they are respectable Christians, says the video, was the “unprecedented” permission recently granted by the Latter-day Saints to Catholics in Utah Valley to celebrate mass in the Provo LDS Tabernacle. But was this action really “unprecedented”? Hardly. A few nineteenth-century examples will make the point, although they could be multiplied manyfold:

By the end of the 1860s other denominations were beginning to establish themselves in the territory. The Church made no effort to keep out other faiths and sometimes cooperated by letting them use Mormon chapels until they could build their own meeting places.

Among the first non-Mormons in Utah were Jews, some of whom came as merchants and businessmen as early as 1854. Strong friendships grew between the Jews and the Mormons, and more than once Brigham Young made Mormon church buildings available for Jewish religious services.

Roman Catholics came to Utah in 1862 as members of the California Volunteers. In 1866 when the Reverend Edward Kelly was looking for a place to celebrate mass, he was allowed to use the old taber-

55 I must say, incidentally, that I have never noticed this alleged craving to be a “mainstream Protestant” in myself, nor have I detected it in other Latter-day Saints.
nacle, and Brigham Young helped him obtain a clear title to land for a cathedral. Though the Catholics and the Latter-day Saints had little in common religiously, they maintained generally good will. The Reverend Lawrence Scanlan arrived in Utah in 1873 . . . and on one occasion in 1873 was invited by Mormon leaders in St. George to use their tabernacle for worship. Fearful that some of the service would have to be omitted because it called for a choir singing in Latin, he learned to his surprise that the leader of the St. George Tabernacle choir had asked for the appropriate music, and in two weeks the choir would sing it in Latin. On May 18 a Catholic high mass was sung by a Mormon choir in the St. George Tabernacle, symbolizing the good will that existed between Father Scanlan and the Saints.56

So there is no evidence of any Latter-day Saint campaign, recent or in the distant past, to masquerade as, or pretend to be like, Christians. But it really doesn’t much matter what the evidence says, nor how many reasons for excluding them from Christendom turn out to be spurious. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, insists the SBC, is not Christian.57 Of course, says John L. Smith, “Mormonism claims that it is Christian because the name ‘Jesus’ is in the name of their church.” And, in fact, the name of their church would seem to offer at least a hint that Latter-day Saints are disciples of Christ. But Rev. Smith is not fooled. “Mormons do believe in a Jesus,” he grants. But it is the wrong one. It is not the same Jesus as depicted in the New Testament.58 And, as an anti-Mormon in the video points out, “If they have the wrong God and the wrong Jesus they have no salvation.”

“The recurrent charge of orthodoxy, even today,” writes scholar Terryl Givens, “is that Mormons are not Christian. Mormons, or members of ‘The Church of Jesus Christ of Later-

57 In Reynolds, *The Challenge of Mormonism*, viii, 23, 31, 48. This is a major theme of the video.
58 In ibid., 5.
day Saints,’ as they remind their orthodox critics, officially and personally find the accusation repugnant, erroneous, and hurtful.”59 I would add, for myself, that they also find it baseless and incoherent. Powerful counterarguments have been deployed by Latter-day Saints, to which fundamentalist anti-Mormons have, on balance, not so much as attempted to respond.60 Zealous critics, who suppose that their ad hoc tests for Christianity are as scientific as chemical analysis, labor under “the mistaken idea that categories like ‘Christian’ or ‘American,’ and the identities they imply, are objective realities, outside of negotiation or manipulation, rather than the products of political conflict and ideological construction.”61

In fact, Christianity is rather difficult to define. “Christians have argued, often passionately,” observes preacher David Steinmetz, “over every conceivable point of Christian doctrine from the filioque to the immaculate conception. There is scarcely an issue of worship, theology, ethics, and politics over which some Christians have not disagreed among themselves.”62 Although he himself rejected it, the great historian of doctrine John Henry Newman mentions the view of Christianity held by some that it “in fact is a mere name for a cluster or family of rival religions all together, religions at variance one with another, and claiming the same appellation, not because there can be assigned any one and the same doctrine as the common foundation of all, but because certain points of agreement may be found here and there of some sort or other by which each in its turn is connected with one or other of the rest.”63 As Givens notes, “Mormonism’s controver-

59 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 81.
60 See, for example, Stephen E. Robinson, Are Mormons Christians? (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991); Peterson and Ricks, Offenders for a Word; also Roger R. Keller, Reformed Christians and Mormon Christians: Let’s Talk! (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Pettingill, 1986).
61 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 20–21. On page 78, Givens discusses one published standard of orthodoxy, designed by Rodney Stark and Charles Glock, according to which Latter-day Saints easily fit into the Christian mainstream.
sial status as a Christian sect may depend on whether ‘Christian’ is
taken to refer to a historical tradition or a mode of Jesus-centered
discipleship, however idiosyncratic its articulation.” That is,
does Christianity consist in discipleship, in accepting and at-
ttempting to follow Jesus Christ? Or does it require passing certain
theological tests, devised by the Baptists or some other self-
anointed arbiter, on matters such as the canon, the metaphysical
Trinity, and the doctrine of original sin? It seems odd that, al-
though our Baptist critics deny vehemently that human works are
needed for salvation, they seem to make an exception in the case
of the Latter-day Saints. To be saved, one must not only accept
Jesus Christ as Lord, but one must foreswear Mormonism and de-
velop a proper theological understanding, consistent with the prin-
ciples of evangelical or fundamentalist Protestantism.

Such problems, however, do not deter the Southern Baptist
Convention. “We . . . unequivocally reject Mormonism as not
authentically Christian,” proclaims Tal Davis. He repeats this
verdict in his brochure on the Book of Mormon: “We cannot rec-
ognize . . . Mormonism as authentically Christian,” he says. In
an earlier article, Mormon Puzzle author Robert McKay set forth
what seems to be the essence of the SBC’s methodology in these
materials: “Having assumed that what I believe is Christian doc-
trine,” he wrote, “any doctrines which contradict mine are by
definition not Christian.” “Mormons . . . usually refer to them-
selves as a religion,” reasoned John L. Smith, warming up for his
Mormon Puzzle contributions. “Since Judaism and Islam are re-
ligions (and are, therefore, non-Christian), and Mormonism is also
a religion, then it is also non-Christian.” Three times in the
video, Phil Roberts, Director of Interfaith Witness for the North
American Mission Board of the SBC, pointedly misstates the offi-
cial name of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. “The

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64 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 81.
66 Davis, “A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon.”
68 John L. Smith, The Evangel 44/3 (May/June 1997): 1. I am grateful to
Stan Barker, who located this quotation for me in the archives of the annual
“Philastus” award competition, for which, at the time of writing, Rev. Smith’s
remark is a finalist.
Church of the Latter-day Saints," he calls us, making a strategically helpful omission.

There is, throughout these materials, a palpable slipperiness in the use of certain terms. This is apparent in the brochure "The Mormon Puzzle: Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity."

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints . . .

professes to be a Christian church. However, a careful comparison of basic doctrinal positions of that church to those of historical, biblical Christianity reveal [sic] many radical differences.69

Is it the intent of the pamphlet to compare two utterly different religions (Mormonism and "Christianity")? Or to compare a standard, historic Christianity to a nonstandard variant? Few knowledgeable Latter-day Saints, if any, would want to deny that the restored gospel of Jesus Christ is substantially different in a number of ways from the mainstream Christian sects, either today or in subapostolic times. Yet they would overwhelmingly insist that they are, indeed, Christians.

The Mormon Puzzle material, by contrast, clearly assumes that if Mormonism does not match traditional Christianity, as the SBC defines it, it cannot be Christian at all. They offer no justification for this claim. "Historic," mainstream Christendom is simply assumed, without authority and without argument, to exhaust the possible range of Christian belief.70 Yet it is not at all clear that fundamentalist or evangelical Protestantism has a right to stake an exclusive claim on "historic" Christianity. Nor even, some have said, to claim it at all. "And this one thing at least is certain; whatever history teaches, whatever it omits, whatever it exaggerates or extenuates, whatever it says and unsays, at least the Christianity of history is not Protestantism," wrote the great John Henry Newman. "If ever there were a safe truth, it is this."71 On 9 October 1845, the day after completing his classic Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine from which these words are quoted,

69 "Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity."
70 By contrast, powerful reasons exist to reject this naive equation. See Peterson and Ricks, Offenders for a Word.
Newman, who had been raised in a Protestant home that leaned in the direction of Calvinism, entered the Roman Catholic Church. "This utter incongruity between Protestantism and historical Christianity is a plain fact," he said, "whether the latter be regarded in its earlier or in its later centuries."72

Carefully misunderstanding his sources and yanking them from their proper context, Robert McKay even portrays the restored gospel of Jesus Christ as "anti-Christian," and hostile to Christianity.73 Joseph Smith’s account of the first vision, as McKay helpfully distorts it, teaches that "all Christian doctrine was an abomination, and all Christian leaders were corrupt."74 The Latter-day Saints, laments the video, make three hundred thousand converts "from Christian denominations each year."75

Like Phil Roberts with his "Church of the Latter-day Saints," the Mormon Puzzle material obscures and even denies the central role of the Savior Jesus Christ in the faith and practice of his restored church. The Southern Baptist curriculum packet seeks to convince its audience that Latter-day Saints do not look to Jesus for salvation, but instead to the church. We might coin the word ecclesiolartry to express the accusation. Latter-day Saint expressions of faith—as summarized by their Baptist critics—are said to provide evidence for this.

"A Mormon’s testimony has very little to do with Jesus," explains Michael Reynolds, "except as a side issue."76 "An LDS testimony may go something like this: ‘I bear you my testimony that I know that Joseph Smith is a true prophet, and that the Book of Mormon is true and that the LDS church is true.’"77 Reynolds even gives his students "an example of an LDS testimony"—which, of course, is not really "an example of an LDS testimony" at all, but a specimen devised by the anti-Mormon Baptist minister Michael Reynolds: "An LDS testimony can be on various subjects

72 Ibid., 35.
73 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 67–68.
74 In ibid., 17.
75 Since neither the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints nor anybody else gathers statistics on the previous affiliations of converts, this seems a highly dubious figure.
76 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 7.
77 Ibid., emphasis in the original.
such as the *Book of Mormon*, Joseph Smith, or the truthfulness of the Mormon church.” “An LDS testimony typically encompasses all three: ‘I bear you my testimony that the *Book of Mormon* is true and that Joseph Smith is a prophet and that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is true.”

It escapes me how anyone could possibly testify of the Book of Mormon, the prophethood of Joseph Smith, and the divine origins of the church without understanding that all of these point toward the redeeming Son of God and draw any salvific power and eternal significance that they might possess directly from him. Still, lest we think that we are obliged to take only Rev. Reynolds’s word for this, we also have the unbiased statement of Rev. J. E. Cook that “LDS testimony . . . is not the testimony of a savior, but a church, a book, a man.” And there is more. An anti-Mormon in the video assures his audience that “testimony is nothing more than you telling the person that you believe in Joseph Smith, that he was a true prophet, that you believe that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the one true church.”

Thus, on the basis of such objective proof, the Southern Baptist Convention has demonstrated beyond a reasonable doubt that, as Rev. Reynolds puts it, “many Mormons think more of Joseph Smith Jr. than of Jesus.” In fact, Reynolds discloses, in the Latter-day Saint view “eternal life is gained not through Jesus Christ but through the Mormon church.” That, it would seem, is why, according to Robert McKay, “The LDS church’s missionary program is one of proselytizing, rather than evangelism. Its goal is not to lead lost sinners to faith in Jesus, but to detach people from their churches and attach them to the LDS church.” For, says Rev. Cook, Mormons believe that it is the leaders of their church who will dictate who goes to heaven, and who goes to hell, who is saved, and who is damned. “Included in

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78 Reynolds, *Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends*, 18, emphasis in the original.
80 Ibid., 13.
81 Ibid., 15; compare “Patterns in the Cults,” a 1986 leaflet included in the Mormon Puzzle materials.
the keys [of the priesthood] are salvation and the right to bestow or remove it, according to the works of the individual."83

This is, I must say, new doctrine to me. And well worth the price of admission. I had never before heard that my church teaches the possibility of salvation apart from Christ, and my copy of the Book of Mormon declares that "the keeper of the gate is the Holy One of Israel; and he employeth no servant there; and there is none other way save it be by the gate" (2 Nephi 9:41). I suspect that, when he says that the priesthood has the right to bestow or withhold salvation, Michael Reynolds has confused the Latter-day Saints with medieval Roman Catholics. In fact, of course, this is all nonsense. Reynolds's portrayal of the priesthood savors less of Gordon B. Hinckley or Howard W. Hunter than of T. S. Eliot's Thomas Becket, responding to a tempter:

No! shall I, who keep the keys
Of heaven and hell, supreme alone in England,
Who bind and loose, with power from the Pope,
Descend to desire a punier power?
Delegate to deal the doom of damnation,
To condemn kings, not serve among their servants,
Is my open office. No! Go.84

The pamphlet "A Closer Look at the Mormon Plan of Salvation" labors mightily to portray the faith of the Latter-day Saints as a religion of human works rather than of divine grace. As the "Belief Bulletin: Mormons" says of fallen humanity, in the supposed view of the Latter-day Saints, "The consequences of their sin are erased by their allegiance to the tenets of Mormonism." There is no mention of the atonement of Christ.85 Robert McKay plays a similar game with Latter-day Saint ideas about what happens immediately after death: "The dead go to either paradise or spirit prison," he writes, "depending on their faithfulness to Mormon teachings."86 But this cannot possibly be true, since the vast majority of those who die (in Europe and the Americas little

83 In ibid., 36.
85 "Belief Bulletin: Mormons."
86 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 40.
less than in India and Africa) have no notion of "Mormon teachings" at all. Still, the assertion, false though it is, undeniably furthers the intention, manifest throughout the SBC materials, of portraying the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as arrogating to itself the divine prerogatives and powers of the Redeemer.

The plan of salvation according to the "gospel" of Mormonism is not just a gospel of works—it is a gospel of obedience and obligation to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In Gospel Principles, an official publication of that church, a parable describing the Mormon plan of salvation is told. A debtor begs his creditor for mercy as his debts are large and long overdue. Just as the cruel creditor is about to cast the man in prison a friend intervenes who says to the creditor, "You will pay the debt to me and I will set the terms. It will not be easy, but it will be possible." The friend who intervened, not with a free gift, but with a loan to be repaid, is symbolic of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Each devout Saint therefore is now working hard to pay off their debt to the church. Their gospel (good news) is no gospel. It is not the gospel of freedom through Christ, it is a gospel of servitude and obligation to a religious organization.87

This is, in manifold ways, a gross distortion of Latter-day Saint belief. And, candidly, it borders on dishonesty in its abuse of the evidence. The friend in the parable to which the Baptist pamphlet alludes is most emphatically not "symbolic of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints." The parable occurs in a chapter of Gospel Principles entitled "The Atonement," in a "unit" or section of the book called "Jesus Christ as Our Savior." It is prefaced by a paragraph that reads as follows:

Elder Boyd K. Packer of the Council of the Twelve gave the following instruction to show how Christ’s

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87 "The Mormon Plan of Salvation."
atone ment makes it possible to be saved from sin if we do our part.88

The parable is immediately followed by two sentences explaining that

Our sins are our spiritual debts. Without Jesus Christ, who is our Savior and Mediator, we would all pay for our sins by suffering spiritual death.89

Where is there even the slightest hint that this parable refers to the church, rather than to our Savior, Jesus Christ? Where is there, anywhere in Latter-day Saint doctrine, any notion that we can ever pay off our debts to God? The Book of Mormon certainly knows of no such idea: “I say unto you, my brethren,” taught King Benjamin, “that if you should render all the thanks and praise which your whole soul has power to possess ... I say, if ye should serve him with all your whole souls yet ye would be unprofitable servants” (Mosiah 2:20–21).

Robert McKay rightly informs his readers that, in the Latter-day Saint conception, this life involves a “preparation for the world to come.” But then he proceeds subtly to mislead them by saying that “Proper preparation, according to the Mormon church, includes membership in the church, accepting Joseph Smith as a prophet, accepting the Book of Mormon as scripture, participating in Mormon temple rituals, and a multitude of other works and ordinances.”90 He has omitted the most important act of preparation of all: acceptance of Christ. If a person does not genuinely accept Christ, no ordinance will ultimately avail that person anything at all. It is deeply untruthful to pretend that there exists or could exist a genuine but truly Christless Mormonism. Like the ancient Nephite prophets of the Book of Mormon, “we talk of Christ, we rejoice in Christ, we preach of Christ, we prophesy of Christ, and we write according to our prophecies, that our children may know to what source they may look for a remission of their sins” (2 Nephi 25:26).

88 Gospel Principles (Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997), 75.
89 Ibid., 78.
Membership in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is obtained only through baptism, wherein we take upon ourselves the name of Christ (see 2 Nephi 31:13 and innumerable other passages). The first of “The Articles of Faith of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,” written by Joseph Smith and regarded as canonical scripture by members of the church, declares that “We believe in God, the Eternal Father, and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.” The fourth identifies “Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ” as “the first principle of the Gospel.” Accepting Joseph Smith entails acceptance of the Savior to whom he testified, since, as Joseph himself taught, “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.” Acceptance of the Book of Mormon, which, as its title page indicates, was written “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God,” necessarily includes acceptance of its testimony of Christ. The ordinances of the temple are expressly Christ-centered. To attempt to separate Jesus from Mormonism is both bizarre and disingenuous.

To make their task easier, though, the SBC’s experts attempt to separate the restored Church of Jesus Christ from its charter document, the Book of Mormon. The Baptist materials repeatedly contend that the Book of Mormon does not teach Mormonism, and that Mormon doctrines are not to be found in the Book of Mormon. This makes it easier to downplay the teachings of the Book of Mormon on such things as the atonement, the deity of Christ, and the necessity of grace—which are absolutely central to it and to the gospel.

In an interview in the SBC video, Sandra Tanner says of the Latter-day Saints that “their main doctrines” come from the Doctrine and Covenants and Pearl of Great Price rather than the Book of Mormon. While many of the distinctive doctrines of the church are found more clearly in the other scriptures than in the Book of Mormon, does it follow, because these doctrines are unique and distinctive, that they are more fundamental? Not necessarily. Perhaps an analogy will help: While skin and eye color, hair length, and accent are important for distinguishing one person from another, such “accidental” attributes must not be allowed to distract

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91 Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith, 119, 312, drawing on Revelation 19:10.
92 In, for example, Davis, “A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon.”
from the essential commonalities all humans share. Overemphasis on secondary characteristics is distortion. Failure to keep those shared features in mind allowed Southern slaveholders to feel that blacks were not fully human and helped justify Nazi abuse of the Jews. We must remember the fundamentals. And who will define those fundamentals for the Latter-day Saints? Will it be their professional critic, Sandra Tanner, or the Prophet Joseph Smith? “The fundamental principles of our religion,” said Joseph, “are the testimony of the Apostles and Prophets, concerning Jesus Christ, that He died, was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended into heaven; and all other things which pertain to our religion are only appendages to it.”

“*The moment the atonement of the Savior is done away,*” Brigham Young taught, that moment, at one sweep, the hopes of salvation entertained by the Christian world are destroyed, the foundation of their faith is taken away, and there is nothing left for them to stand upon. When it is gone all the revelations God ever gave to the Jewish nation, to the Gentiles and to us are rendered valueless, and all hope is taken from us at one sweep.”

The fact is that Latter-day Saints do read and treasure the Book of Mormon. And its teachings about Christ and his saving atonement are at the vital core of their faith. As hard as the “experts” try, even the SBC’s propaganda materials cannot fully obscure this reality. The attractive Latter-day Saint family in the video is shown sitting together, reading from the Book of Mormon. And Robert McKay, ever eager to make a damning accusation against the church, even if it conflicts with his other accusations, charges that the Book of Mormon “supplants” the Bible among the Latter-day Saints. The eccentric Thelma “Granny”

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93 *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith*, 121.
94 *Discourses of Brigham Young* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1954), 27.
95 In Reynolds, *The Challenge of Mormonism*, 13. Notwithstanding their supposed lack of interest in the Bible, the Latter-day Saints are strangely particular about which version of it they must ignore: Throughout the video and the accompanying materials, Baptists are told that Mormons accept only the King James Version of the Bible—which will come as a shock to the millions of non-English speaking Latter-day Saints in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.
Geer, who has made a stellar anti-Mormon career out of the rather uninteresting fact that she may have been born into a Latter-day Saint family, offers some unverifiable but dubious-sounding anecdotage as evidence for the allegedly low status of the Old and New Testaments in the Church of Jesus Christ:

Having been raised in the Mormon church, I was taught that the Bible was full of errors and contradictions. All my Mormon friends and family were taught that “the Bible causes ‘a great many to stumble and fall’ and is ‘part of the word of God, part of the word of man, and part of the word of the devil.’ Full of conflicts and errors with ‘much truth taken away and much error added,’ it had no real place in my life or in the life of any other Mormon I had ever met.”96

But it is exceedingly hard to see how the Book of Mormon “supplants” the Bible among the Latter-day Saints if its teachings on the atonement of Christ play no role in their lives or thinking.

So, when John L. Smith and Michael Reynolds rebuke the Latter-day Saints, announcing that “The prophet is not the way, a restoration is not the way, Mormonism is not the way, the priesthood is not the way—Jesus said, ‘I AM THE WAY!’”97 knowledgeable Mormons can only agree. Without Jesus, in Latter-day Saint understanding, prophethood would have neither value nor meaning. Without Jesus, there could obviously never be any restoration of true Christianity. Without Jesus, Mormonism would have no more substance than Protestant fundamentalism. Without Jesus, the “Holy Priesthood, after the Order of the Son of God”—its true, formal name, according to modern revelation (D&C 107:3)—would have no power.

Latter-day Saints know this. So the SBC’s experts must undermine Mormon claims to knowledge. Once again, Latter-day Saint testimonies come under fire. “For the most part,” says Michael Reynolds, “the Mormon is merely repeating by rote what he or she has heard many times before. He or she may believe it,

96 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 55.
97 In ibid., 74–75.
but cannot prove it in any kind of objective way.”98 “This testimony is normally repeated as if by memory, with little inflection or emotion.”99 (In a richly ironic touch, this little falsehood is followed almost immediately by a specimen of a “Christian” testimony, and the class instructor is told to “Have participants write down their Christian testimony using the above structure and practice sharing it with a partner.”)100

Perhaps it would be useful to sample what Latter-day Saints—as opposed to their career detractors—actually say when they share their convictions with one another. During the period of writing the present review, I attended a “fast and testimony meeting,” of the type generally held throughout the church on the first Sunday of each month. This is a time when members of the church come fasting, and many stand before the congregation to “bear their testimonies,” which means, in Latter-day Saint parlance, to express and testify to their religious convictions and to share their “witness” of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The ward or congregation that I attended—my own—is, I would imagine, typical of many thousands around the world, and there was no special theme or issue dominating the meeting.

The services began with an opening hymn entitled “Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer.”101 Following an opening prayer, business, and announcements, the congregation then sang the hymn “I Stand All Amazed,” the words of which are as follows:

I stand all amazed at the love Jesus offers me,
Confused at the grace that so fully he proffers me.
I tremble to know that for me he was crucified,
That for me, a sinner, he suffered, he bled and died.

I marvel that he would descend from his throne divine
To rescue a soul so rebellious and proud as mine,
That he should extend his great love unto such as I,
Sufficient to own, to redeem, and to justify.

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98 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 8.
99 Ibid., 18. Ed Decker has claimed, repeatedly, that Latter-day Saints enter into a robotic or autohypnotic trance when bearing their testimonies.
100 Ibid.
101 H. R. Palmer, “Precious Savior, Dear Redeemer,” Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, no. 103.
I think of his hands pierced and bleeding to pay the debt!
Such mercy, such love, and devotion can I forget?
No, no, I will praise and adore at the mercy seat,
Until at the glorified throne I kneel at his feet.

Refrain: Oh, it is wonderful that he should care for me
Enough to die for me!
Oh, it is wonderful, wonderful to me!102

The emblems of the sacrament were then blessed and passed
to the congregation, as is done during every weekly sacrament
meeting in every Latter-day Saint congregation around the globe.
The bread and water of the sacrament represent the body and
blood of the Savior. The sacramental prayers, which are found in
both the Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, are
the only set, prescribed prayers in the church, and their Christ-
centered focus is unmistakable. The blessing on the water illus-
trates this plainly:

O God, the Eternal Father, we ask thee in the name
of thy Son, Jesus Christ, to bless and sanctify this
[water] to the souls of all those who drink of it, that
they may do it in remembrance of the blood of thy
Son, which was shed for them; that they may witness
unto thee, O God, the Eternal Father, that they do al-
ways remember him, that they may have his Spirit to be
with them. Amen. (D&C 20:79; compare 20:77;
Moroni 4:3; 5:2)

Following the administration of the sacrament, the bishop of
the ward rose to open the testimony-bearing portion of the meet-
ing. As is customary, he led out by expressing his own convic-
tions. On this particular Sunday, he said he had “a testimony of
many things,” but he bore special testimony of the Holy Ghost,
which he illustrated with a pair of personal experiences, and he
assured us of his deep conviction that the Lord cares about each
one of us as individuals.

Fourteen members of the ward, including the bishop and six
children, shared their testimonies. The remarks of the children, it

is true, occasionally did sound like the caricature presented in the Baptist materials, although several expressed their love for their parents and families, and they spoke also about such things as the truth of the scriptures, the love of Heavenly Father, and the guidance of the Holy Ghost. One small boy said, simply, “I love Jesus.”

The first person to speak after the bishop was a woman who thanked her Heavenly Father, very emotionally, for the experiences and struggles through which he has led her. She told of a recent trip to Egypt and Israel, and of how strongly she felt the Holy Ghost while in the Holy Land. As an example, she recounted crossing the Sea of Galilee on a boat. The captain turned off the engine in the middle of the lake, and those on the boat read their scriptures. She thought of Peter, walking on the water, and how he faltered when he paid more attention to the water than to the Lord. She concluded that, “if my eyes are riveted on Jesus, all will be well, and trials will be endurable.” She told, too, of a visit to the Garden Tomb in Jerusalem, and how she felt there, with powerful force, a spiritual witness to the truthfulness of the gospel accounts of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus. This had special impact on her because she has lost two babies, and because a neighbor and member of the ward recently lost a beautiful young daughter to cystic fibrosis.

Two women bore quite emotional witness that “Heavenly Father loves us,” and told of the peace, comfort, and assurance that they had felt during recent difficulties with childbirth, attributing this to the influence of the Holy Ghost. “Father in Heaven loves us,” said one, “and sent his Only Begotten Son to die for us, to help us.” “I am grateful for this knowledge,” said the other. “I don’t know what I would do without it.” A third expressed her gratitude that her house had lately been saved from fire, spoke of recent blessings of divine healing, and testified that “Heavenly Father loves us.” Yet another told the congregation of her gratitude for her children, who have taught her much, and bore record of what she called the “warmth” of the Spirit, which teaches us to yearn for the presence of our Heavenly Father.

A missionary from Mongolia, a convert of three years who is serving in Utah, declared that he was “so thankful to serve the Lord.” His comments focused on the account of the appearance
of the risen Savior among the Nephites, as it is preserved in 3 Nephi in the Book of Mormon. “Joy and happiness,” he said, “come through faith in Jesus Christ.” Finally, yet another member of the ward rose to thank the Lord for his many blessings, and to thank the congregation for their support following a recent death in the family. “Jesus is the Christ,” he concluded, “and our Redeemer.”

Following the testimonies, the congregation sang a closing hymn, entitled “When Faith Endures”:

I will not doubt, I will not fear;
God’s love and strength are always near.
His promised gift helps me to find
An inner strength and peace of mind.
I give the Father willingly
My trust, my prayers, humility.
His Spirit guides; his love assures
That fear departs when faith endures. 103

In the benediction, or closing prayer, the person offering the prayer asked the Lord to help us become “better people and better Christians.”

This short account of a typical Latter-day Saint meeting in a typical Latter-day Saint ward seems to conflict with much of what the SBC’s experts want their audience to believe about the Mormons. When, in one of the most familiar and commonly used of all Mormon hymns, a member of the church sings praise to the Savior, recalling that he came to earth to suffer and atone “for me, a sinner,” it doesn’t fit very well with Rev. Smith’s and Rev. Reynolds’s confident declaration about the Latter-day Saints that “they do not understand themselves to be sinners.”104

In the SBC materials, John L. Smith offers up a gratuitous slur against the Latter-day Saints. “Mormons,” he tells his readers, “say they accept Jesus ‘as the savior of the whole world.’ This has nothing to do with His being one’s ‘personal Savior.’ That concept is totally foreign to LDS theology. Truly, the Mormons have

104 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 71.
another Jesus.” With that charge in mind, I was very much struck when, one month after the testimony meeting just described, I was able to attend another such meeting in the Brigham Young University student ward in which I currently serve. Fifteen people came to the pulpit to declare their convictions. Of these, twelve bore witness of the role of Jesus Christ as Savior and Redeemer, one expressed his gratitude and love for the members of the congregation, another recounted his experience of the presence of God in a time of crisis and testified to the efficacy of prayer, and yet another, after reporting a story in which she had been involved, exhorted us to let the Lord lead and to follow the promptings of the Holy Spirit.

Directly relevant to Rev. Smith’s allegation, though, was the testimony of a Latin American General Authority, visiting his son (a member of the ward) just prior to the April general conference of the Church. “Jesus is our Savior,” he said, “and, in a personal way, my Savior.” And he closed “in the name of my Savior.” He was followed soon thereafter by a young German student, who testified that “Jesus Christ is in the details of our lives, and is our personal Savior.” “I love Jesus Christ,” he said. “He is my personal Savior.” A student from South Africa, emerging from a very serious health crisis a couple of weeks before, told the congregation, “I am grateful for my knowledge that Jesus Christ lives,” declaring that Jesus is “the bright and morning star” in the darkness of despair. “I love my Savior,” he said. An older, Ecuadoran woman, mother to one of the students, bore her testimony mostly in Spanish, including a powerful declaration of faith in “nuestro Salvador.” A student from Chile told of her sense of God’s intimate presence in temple worship, saying, “I love my Savior very much.” And, finally, an American student expressed his conviction of the kindness, closeness, and personal care of our Heavenly Father. Of “my Savior,” he said simply, “He loves us, he loves us.”

Thus it would seem on the basis of empirical evidence that the concept of Christ “being one’s ‘personal Savior’” is not “totally foreign to LDS theology.” The Southern Baptist Convention’s “experts” are wrong.

105 In ibid., 6.
Well, no matter. We are on to other things. Mormon testimonies are merely subjective. "How does he or she 'know' these things are true?" demands Reynolds. "Is he or she in possession of facts, evidence, or hard documentation that prove his or her claim?"106 Not at all. Quite unlike the average Christian, who apparently has a doctorate in biblical archaeology, as well as advanced training in logic, "The Mormon possesses no evidence that will stand up under scrutiny. He or she has a vague reference to the 'Spirit of God' and the subjective demand in Moroni 10:4—and no objective evidence whatsoever."107

"Most LDS converts do not make an objective, scholarly investigation of Mormonism."108 But are we to conclude from this that most Christians do? Is this true today? Not likely. Could it conceivably have been true in, say, thirteenth-century France? In nineteenth-century Ghana? Among first-century Palestinian peasants? Among, say, Galilean fishermen? How long did Peter, James, John, Andrew, and the other apostles deliberate before they accepted Jesus' summons to follow him?

And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.

And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him. (Matthew 4:18–22)

How much "objective, scholarly investigation" preceded Nathanael's decision, after initial resistance, to accept Jesus as the divine Son of God?

106 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 7.
107 Ibid., 7–8.
108 Davis, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon."
Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.

Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!

Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.

Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.

Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou?

(John 1:45-50)

Peter came to know that Jesus is the Christ, not through flesh and blood, but through divine revelation (see Matthew 16:13-17). Paul prayed for the Ephesian saints “that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him: The eyes of your understanding being enlightened” (Ephesians 1:17-18). For the Philippians, he prayed “that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment: That ye may approve things that are excellent” (Philippians 1:9-10). Timothy and he told the Colossians, “since the day we heard it, [we] do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that ye might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding” (Colossians 1:9).

But what is all this praying? Why didn’t Paul just cruise through Ephesus, Philippi, and Colosse, and hand them a book? It is the clear teaching of the New Testament that knowledge of spiritual things comes from and by the Spirit (see 1 Corinthians 2:10-16). Paul taught that “no man can say that Jesus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3). “No man can know Jesus the Christ,” agreed Brigham Young, “except it be revealed
from heaven to him." The Holy Ghost, Jesus promised his disciples, "shall teach you all things," and will testify of him, and, as "the Spirit of truth," "will guide you into all truth" (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13). It is puzzling that Jesus would have thought it necessary to promise the coming of the Spirit if reason and the Bible were sufficient, by themselves, for the recognition of religious truth.

Nevertheless, and against the Bible, the SBC's experts insist that "objective, scholarly investigation" is the way to religious truth. "The discussions are an appeal to emotion," Robert McKay reveals. And the test of the Book of Mormon is pure "emotionalism," resting merely upon "some... subjective feeling." "Warn the Mormon about trusting in feelings (i.e., the burning in the bosom) for a validation of Mormonism's truth claim," advises the "Belief Bulletin: Mormons." "Without historical, objective verification, feelings are useless." In fact, says Michael Reynolds, "Investigators who look closely at the origins, history, and contents of The Book of Mormon usually come to radically different conclusions about the truth of Mormonism."

The Gold Bible Hoax

And, indeed, the Mormon Puzzle material specifically targets the Book of Mormon. "Certainly," says Robert McKay, "the book itself bears few if any marks of divine inspiration." It is said to contain "doctrinal errors, absurdities, anachronisms, and other problems." The pamphlet "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon" purportedly "shows why the LDS claims for the

109 Discourses of Brigham Young, 37.
110 They clearly presume that "objective, scholarly investigation" supports their stance—an assertion that tempts comment, to be sure, but unfortunately well beyond the scope of this review.
111 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 22, 23.
112 "Belief Bulletin: Mormons."
113 Davis, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon."
115 In ibid., 17.
book are without historical, anthropological, or archaeological foundation."\(^{116}\)

But the Baptist materials typically overstate the archaeological strength of the Bible, and grossly exaggerate the archaeological weakness of the Book of Mormon.\(^ {117}\) "The Bible has withstood the attacks of skeptics for centuries," announces one of the pamphlets. "Christians remain confident that it is the reliable, inspired Word of God. Historical research, archaeology, and textual studies have confirmed its veracity. The Book of Mormon, conversely, lacks even meager support for its historical or theological contents."\(^ {118}\) "It isn’t that we know nothing about the Americas," the ever-immoderate Sandra Tanner says in the videotape, "it’s that everything we know about them doesn’t fit the Book of Mormon culture. So that it’s at total odds with everything we know about America.”

“Total.” “Everything.” “Nothing.” One would think, in view of the comments of our SBC experts, that those who believe in the Book of Mormon—not merely against the preponderance of the evidence but against all of it—must be manifest morons. Here are just a few of the things that such judgments fail to note:


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\(^ {116}\) "Introduction and Instructional Guide."


\(^ {118}\) Davis, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon."


*FARMS Review of Books* (formerly the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*), published first annually and then twice annually by FARMS since 1989.


*Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, published twice a year since 1992 by FARMS.


A personal experience with three of the SBC experts may shed some light on just how much they really care about the state of Book of Mormon evidence. In 1984, John L. Smith’s *Utah Evangel* ran an article ridiculing the Latter-day Saints on the grounds that the name Alma—which, in the Book of Mormon, belongs to two men of Hebrew ancestry—is really Latin and can only be given to a female. I wrote to Rev. Smith, pointing out that Yigael Yadin had found a document in the 1960s down by the Dead Sea, referring to an early second-century Jew named “Alma, son of Judah.” Rev. Smith responded in writing that, if I would send him the evidence, he would report on it. I did, and he didn’t. But the story gets worse. Utah Missions, Inc., ran the same argument at least once or twice more in its publications thereafter, and referred to it on at least one other occasion. Moreover, although I have asked them to do the honorable thing many, many times in the years since I first contacted Utah Missions, Inc., on the subject,
both Michael Reynolds and Robert McKay expressly and repeatedly refused to tell the truth to their audience about *Alma*. In an unsolicited letter to me, dated 20 March 1998, John L. Smith declared that the matter of *Alma* is "unworthy of any extensive study or reply"—which is not only arguably untrue but fails to justify in any way his failure to keep his promise to tell the truth.\(^{119}\) In the April 1998 issue of *The Inner Circle*, the publication that Utah Missions, Inc., sends out to its donors, Rev. Smith boasted, "It is interesting that no effort is made to disprove the information that we provide. Mormons are unable to refute facts."\(^{120}\)

"We have attempted," says Reynolds of himself and his co-authors, "to call on people from around the country with the highest integrity in interfaith witness and counter-cult ministries."\(^{121}\) It is difficult to convince hostile critics who, by all appearances, have never looked at the evidence, and who sometimes even make a point of pride of their refusal to do so.\(^{122}\)

Furthermore, in their curricular materials, the Baptists construct a test for the Book of Mormon that the Bible itself cannot

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120 John L. Smith, "Criticisms of Our Work," *The Inner Circle* 15/4 (April 1998): 9. Ironically, Rev. Smith then immediately cites as an example of his irrefutable "facts" a passage from my article cited in the previous note, which he grievously misuses. Perhaps he is unaware of the E-mail correspondence I have been conducting for several months with the new director of Utah Missions, Inc., the Rev. Dennis A. Wright, in which I have pointed out, and Rev. Wright has conceded, a number of errors in UMI’s recent publications. In 1997, I sent a lengthy and detailed E-mail to what was then called the Home Missions Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, identifying fifteen indisputable errors in the most recent issue of UMI’s flagship tabloid, *The Evangel*. Within a few weeks, perhaps coincidentally and perhaps not, the SBC fired UMI’s then director, Michael Reynolds, along with his assistant, Robert McKay.


122 This attitude is amazingly common. As I write, someone who uses the name “Will Bagley” is loudly proclaiming, via the internet, his contempt for authors associated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies—while boasting that he has never read anything they have written because they are so obviously incompetent and dishonest.
meet: "In order for Christians or others to accept these claims [for the Book of Mormon's historicity], Mormons must demonstrate that their version of the Book of Mormon's origin and story is historically accurate." Why should this be so? While I am aware of no poll on the subject, anybody acquainted with the current state of biblical archaeology surely knows that a sizable number of the specialists in the subject are agnostics, and that very, very few of them can be classified as conservative Protestants, let alone biblical inerrantists. "Proof" of such crucial, large-scale biblical stories as the flood, the exodus, and the Conquest—let alone of the resurrection of Christ—has not been found. And yet biblical archaeology today is far more advanced than ever before. What of the Christians who lived before, say, A.D. 1800? Were they fools, because they believed in the Bible without a shred of archaeological proof? What of the peasant Christians of Mexico and Ethiopia, who know nothing whatever of biblical scholarship? Is their faith misplaced?

Tal Davis's pamphlet, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon," suggests that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon himself. "Smith was literate," notes Davis, "and had access to several libraries near his home." This is true, of course, but superficial and misleading. By today's standards, Joseph Smith was only marginally literate when he translated the Book of Mormon. He was not a reader. "He seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children," recalled his mother, Lucy Mack Smith. And, while he may theoretically have had "access" to libraries, there is strong reason to believe that, for reasons compounded in large part of poverty (inability to pay library membership fees), lack of education, lack of time, and lack of interest, he never used them during that early period. Emma Smith, the Prophet's wife, insisted to the end of her life that, unaided, her husband was incapable of having composed the Book of Mormon.

123 Davis, "A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon."
124 Ibid.
125 Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1979), 82.
I wrote for Joseph Smith during the work of translation. . . . The larger part of this labor was done [in] my presence and where I could see and know what was being done. . . . During no part of it did Joseph Smith have any mss. [manuscripts] or book of any kind from which to read or dictate except the metallic [sic] plates which I knew he had. . . . 127 Joseph Smith could neither write nor dictate a coherent and well-worded letter, let alone dictate a book like the Book of Mormon. . . . [F]or one so ignorant and unlearned as he was, it was simply impossible. 128

Aware that Joseph Smith almost certainly could not have authored the Book of Mormon, critics of the church have often resorted to explanations involving one or more mysterious co-conspirators, or pointed to various (usually lost) manuscripts from which Joseph Smith may possibly, perhaps, have cribbed his frontier yarn. These theories have not held up well under scrutiny. 129 Nevertheless, Tal Davis informs his readers that Joseph Smith probably plagiarized from unspecified early nineteenth-century works to produce the Book of Mormon. 130 Really? The church’s Brigham Young University has now published the two leading candidates, so that interested parties can judge for themselves the


130 See Davis, “A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon.”
likelihood that they served Joseph Smith as sources for the Book of Mormon.131

The SBC’s materials attack the Book of Mormon in other ways, as well. “It contains plain absurdities,” complains Robert McKay, referring to the story of the beheading of Shiz in Ether 15:31.132 But Dr. Gary M. Hadfield, M.D., professor of neuropathology at the Medical College of Virginia, surveying precedents in medical literature, has written that the story is entirely plausible.133 “The Book of Mormon denies its own inspiration,” McKay says, referring to 1 Nephi 19:6 and Ether 5:1.134 But in these verses the Book of Mormon simply fails to profess infallibility. It certainly does not “deny” its inspiration. (Note the fundamentalist Protestant assumption here, where inspiration and inerrancy seem to function, without the least argument or justification, as precise synonyms.) “Reformed Egyptian does not exist as a language,” declares the “Belief Bulletin: Mormons,” completely innocent of serious scholarship on the subject.135 “Mormonism claims that the church totally apostatized,” writes Robert McKay, “yet the Book of Mormon denies the possibility.”136 He is referring to 1 Nephi 11:36, which says nothing of the kind.

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134 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 14.


The Canon as a Weapon

Not content to argue, however weakly, that the Book of Mormon is false, the experts from the SBC seek to argue that it could not, even in principle, ever be true.

The authors of the Mormon Puzzle materials are mightily offended that Latter-day Saints believe in an open canon. “Christians,” says Michael Reynolds “have historically held that the Bible alone represents the totality of God’s revelation and no additional scripture is needed.”\(^{137}\) Reynolds fails both to mention the ancient historical disputes about the canon and to note the disagreements between Christian groups on this issue that persist even today. For him, the Bible is the Protestant Bible. And anybody who accepts any more scriptural books than Michael Reynolds accepts is a non-Christian. One naturally remembers Henry Fielding’s fictional Parson Thwackum: “When I mention religion,” says Rev. Thwackum, “I mean the Christian religion; and not only the Christian religion, but the Protestant religion; and not only the Protestant religion, but the Church of England.”\(^{138}\)

“The Bible (Old and New Testaments) is the unique, revealed, and inspired Word of God,” says the “Comparison Chart.” “It is the sole authority for faith and practice for Christians (2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).”\(^{139}\) And the “Belief Bulletin: Mormons” concurs, even using the same scriptural passages to support its assertion (while, by the way, strangely seeming to reject the Hebrew Bible): “The New Testament ... alone,” it says, “claims to be fully inspired of God and usable for the establishment of doctrine (2 Tim. 3:15–17; 2 Pet. 1:19–21).”\(^{140}\)

But this is not true. The New Testament didn’t even exist at the time 2 Timothy and 2 Peter were written. Paul’s second letter to Timothy was probably sent from Rome in A.D. 64–65.\(^{141}\) The other Pauline epistles had already been composed, but “the

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\(^{137}\) In ibid., 51; compare “Patterns in the Cults.”


\(^{139}\) “Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity.”

\(^{140}\) “Belief Bulletin: Mormons.”

\(^{141}\) G. C. D. Howley, in The International Bible Commentary, ed. F. F. Bruce (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1098. It will be noted that I am using a conservative, evangelical Protestant commentary.
available evidence suggests that Paul’s letters were not brought together and circulated as a collection before c. A.D. 90.”\(^{142}\) And if Peter is really the author of 2 Peter, that epistle must also have been written in the midsixties, before his martyrdom under Nero. Conservative Protestant scholarship tends to hold that the gospels of Mark\(^{143}\) and Luke\(^{144}\) were composed during the same period. But Matthew (A.D. 75–80)\(^{145}\) and John (probably composed at Ephesus, late in the first century)\(^{146}\) still remained to be written, as did the book of Revelation (A.D. 69–96)\(^{147}\) and, almost certainly, other documents that would eventually be gathered up to form the New Testament.

Thus the only canon of scripture that the original audiences of 2 Timothy and 2 Peter knew was the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament.

The apostles themselves had no . . . written rule of faith and conduct. Their Bible, and that of the Jews to this day, consisted of the Old Testament; this was the Canon of Holy Writ accepted by Jesus Himself, and referred to simply as “the scriptures” throughout the New Testament writings. It was not until the year A.D. 393 that a church council first listed the 27 New Testament books now universally recognized. There was thus a period of about 350 years during which the New Testament Canon was in process of being formed.\(^{148}\)

If 2 Timothy 3:15–17 and 2 Peter 1:19–21 actually bar additional revelation or scripture, the New Testament is in serious trouble. But, fortunately, there is no cause for alarm. Neither passage says anything, anything at all, about a closed canon, or the end of revelation, or the all-sufficiency of the Bible. (And since, again, no “Bible” yet existed, it is difficult to see how they could have.)

\(^{142}\) David F. Payne, in ibid., 1564.
\(^{143}\) Stephen S. Short, in ibid., 1157.
\(^{144}\) Laurence E. Porter, in ibid., 1182–83.
\(^{145}\) H. L. Ellison, in ibid., 1121.
\(^{146}\) David J. Ellis, in ibid., 1230.
\(^{147}\) F. F. Bruce, in ibid., 1593.
\(^{148}\) David F. Payne, in ibid., 1005.
Moreover, the claim that the Bible is the only legitimate source of doctrine and practice for real Christians denies the Christianity of hundreds of millions of Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox believers and excommunicates virtually all disciples of Christ from the first century to the time of Luther and Calvin. It is a brazen act of naked theological imperialism. It attempts to impose the post-Reformation theological prejudices of northwestern Europe on every other generation and nationality of Christendom. So why do it? John Henry Newman wryly observed that Protestants *know* Christian history does not support their position, which, he said, “is shown in the determination . . . of dispensing with historical Christianity altogether and of forming a Christianity from the Bible alone: men never would have put it aside, unless they had despaired of it.”\(^{149}\) Indeed, it is really only a small minority even within Protestantism that claims to derive its doctrine and practices entirely from the Bible alone. As Hans Dieter Betz commented, in his 1997 presidential address to the Society of Biblical Literature, “Only the so-called left wing of the Reformation understood the Reformation to imply an apocalyptic repudiation of all ancient history, culture, and forms of Christianity [note the plural!!], and the call to return to the New Testament with its plain and uncorrupted gospel of Jesus.”\(^{150}\)

“Christians,” says one of the SBC brochures, “regard the Bible as the sole final authority in God’s revelation to mankind and its meaning [as] clear. While most cults will regard the Bible as the Word of God, a major pattern in these sects is their addition to the Word of God.”\(^{151}\) But, of course, this rule cannot possibly have been true of the earliest Christians, those who were closest to Jesus and his apostles, for they undeniably added to the canon they had received (the Old Testament) scriptural texts they themselves had composed. If the first generation of the disciples of Jesus had followed the SBC’s rule, there would be no New Testament. What Terryl Givens observes of uninformed mass opinion is true also of the writers of the Mormon Puzzle material: “Popular Christian thought seldom encompasses the notion that the Apos-

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\(^{151}\) “Patterns in the Cults.”
ties were Christian (that is, disciples of Christ) before there were
councils, creeds, or even a New Testament.152

Undeterred by historical facts, however, our experts press on.
"Old and New Testament prophets were God's spokesmen," says
one of the brochures. "Their words were always consistent with
the Bible."153 But how could Old Testament prophets be "con­
sistent with the Bible" when the Bible didn't yet exist? Occasion­
ally, one is tempted to see in the extreme forms of Protestant fun­
damentalism something that might be termed bibliolatry, where
allegiance to a book takes on disproportionate importance even
against clear historical evidence. "It is possible," says the Protes­
tant scholar Floyd V. Filson,

to stress the Bible so much and give it so central a place
that the sensitive Christian conscience must rebel. We
may illustrate such overstress on the Bible by the often­
used (and perhaps misused) quotation from Chilling­
worth: "The Bible alone is the religion of Protestant­
ism." Or we may recall how often it has been said that
the Bible is the final authority for the Christian.

If it will not seem too facetious, I would like to put
in a good word for God. It is God and not the Bible
who is the central fact for the Christian. When we speak
of "the Word of God" we use a phrase which, pro­
perly used, may apply to the Bible, but it has a deeper
primary meaning. It is God who speaks to man. But he
does not do so only through the Bible. He speaks
through prophets and apostles. He speaks through spe­
cific events. And while his unique message to the
Church finds its central record and written expression
in the Bible, this very reference to the Bible reminds us
that Christ is the Word of God in a living, personal way
which surpasses what we have even in this unique book.
Even the Bible proves to be the Word of God only
when the Holy Spirit working within us attests the truth
and divine authority of what the Scripture says. Faith
must not give to the aids that God provides the

152 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 89.
153 "Belief Bulletin: Mormons."
reverence and attention that belong only to God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Our hope is in God; our life is in Christ; our power is in the Spirit. The Bible speaks to us of the divine center of all life and help and power, but it is not the center. The Christian teaching about the canon must not deify the Scripture.\textsuperscript{154}

It is a warning that, I think, some of the critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints would do well to heed. Ignoring it leads not only to theological error but even to logical fallacy: “The Christian,” says Michael Reynolds, “has chosen the Bible alone as the standard for faith; therefore, the LDS church is clearly wrong in its understanding of who and what God is.”\textsuperscript{155} The “therefore” is misleading. The first part of Rev. Reynolds’s claim does not logically imply the second. Consider a statement of similar structure: “The Muslim has chosen the Qur’an alone as the standard for faith; therefore the Southern Baptist Convention is clearly wrong in its understanding of who and what God is.” Obviously, in order for this hypothetical statement to be true, certain things must be assumed, among them the truth of the Qur’an, the accuracy of the Muslim’s interpretation of it, and the incompatibility of Baptist doctrine with Qur’anic doctrine—at least one of which, I presume, Rev. Reynolds would dispute. As it happens, Latter-day Saints agree with the Baptists that the Bible is true. But no knowledgeable Latter-day Saint will grant that Rev. Reynolds holds the copyright on biblical interpretation, nor his complacent assumption that “the Bible and the LDS Church cannot both be correct.”\textsuperscript{156}

But it isn’t really accurate to say even of evangelical Protestants that they base their beliefs on the Bible alone, however much they may think so—as a cursory look at the Mormon Puzzle documents will serve to demonstrate:


\textsuperscript{155} In Reynolds, \textit{The Challenge of Mormonism}, 2.

\textsuperscript{156} In ibid. “When the Bible is viewed as the Mormons see it, its effectiveness to lead men to Christ is destroyed.” Reynolds, \textit{The Challenge of Mormonism}, 53.
• The pamphlet "A Closer Look at the Mormon Concept of God," we are told, "analyzes the beliefs of the LDS on the nature and attributes of God and evaluates them in relation to the Bible and philosophy."\textsuperscript{157}

• Contrary to the claims of the SBC's literature, the doctrine of the Trinity is most definitely not "derived solely from the Bible."\textsuperscript{158} Nor, as the great John Henry Cardinal Newman pointed out, although he himself certainly believed the doctrine to be a true one, is the metaphysical Trinity even to be clearly found in the early fathers of the church.\textsuperscript{159}

• "As a man," one of the brochures says of Jesus, "He possessed two natures—human and divine." But this language is also not "derived solely from the Bible."\textsuperscript{160} It belongs, rather, to such documents as the "Definition of Chalcedon," which was issued by the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451.

"Within the Bible," remarks Michael Reynolds, "God revealed all of Himself that He wished mankind to know, and no other revelation is necessary or pending."\textsuperscript{161} But it is passing strange, if this is so vitally central a biblical principle, that the Bible never says anything of the kind. Why would it omit so important a fact? And what were all those debates in the councils about, and all those creeds, if everything was clearly settled?

The Mormon Puzzle material informs its audience that "The Bible explicitly warns against adding to or detracting from its teaching (Rev. 22:18; Deut. 4:2)."\textsuperscript{162} (Is there any Latter-day Saint missionary, anywhere, who has not run into this hoary old chestnut? And is there any missionary who does not know the obvious answer?) This claim is not true. Revelation 22:18 does, yes, prohibit anyone from "adding" anything to "this book." But the words this book cannot refer to the entire Bible since, once again, the Bible did not yet exist as a book. They can only refer to the book of Revelation itself. And if Deuteronomy 4:2 bans additional scripture, then—manifestly, since they were composed in

\textsuperscript{157} "Introduction and Instructional Guide," emphasis added.
\textsuperscript{158} "Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity."
\textsuperscript{159} Newman, Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine, 41–44.
\textsuperscript{160} "Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity."
\textsuperscript{161} In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 51.
\textsuperscript{162} "Belief Bulletin: Mormons."
later periods—most of the Old Testament and all of the New Testament must be rejected.

**Exodus 20:16**

It is disconcerting and disheartening to see the level of distortion and mischaracterization that exists in these official Baptist curriculum documents.

**The False Dichotomy between Grace and Works**

The SBC materials emphasize that Latter-day Saints believe they earn their own salvation.163 "The Jesus of Mormonism only provided the resurrection," explains Michael Reynolds. "His death made it possible for all men of every age to be resurrected. What we call 'salvation' must be provided by the person who hopes to receive it through good works."164 "His atonement (death and resurrection) provides immortality for all people regardless of their faith," says one of the Southern Baptist brochures. "Jesus' atonement provided immortality for all people." This is, of course, entirely true. And it is undeniably biblical (as attested by 1 Corinthians 15:22). But the brochure implicitly insists that, in the Latter-day Saint view, immortality is all that Christ provides. In "Christianity," it says, "Salvation is release from the guilt and power of sin through God's gift of grace."165

It is an utterly false and misleading implication, for Latter-day Saints have always believed, with their fellow Christians, that "Salvation is release from the guilt and power of sin through God's gift of grace."

Thus J. E. Cook grossly misinforms his trusting readers when he alleges that, for Latter-day Saints, "Exaltation is a works-based salvation, totally dependent on the efforts of the individual and not the grace of God. . . . The LDS view of salvation is based on the works of man rather than the works of God."166 "Salvation

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163 As at Reynolds, *Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends*, 14; compare "Patterns in the Cults."
165 "Comparison Chart—Mormonism and Christianity."
166 In Reynolds, *The Challenge of Mormonism*, 36, 37; compare 38.
in Mormonism,” Michael Reynolds says, “is entering one of three kingdoms of glory hereafter . . . and since all men will enter one of these kingdoms, all men are saved, including those who actively reject Jesus or the very existence of God.” But this is extremely misleading, for all will be obliged to acknowledge Christ. “Yea,” testified the prophet Alma, “every knee shall bow, and every tongue confess before him. Yea, even at the last day, when all men shall stand to be judged of him, then shall they confess that he is God” (Mosiah 27:31). Specifically describing those in the lowest of the degrees of glory, the telestial kingdom, Doctrine and Covenants 76:110 says, “These all shall bow the knee, and every tongue shall confess to him who sits upon the throne forever and ever.” Brigham Young is far more to be trusted on this issue than the professional anti-Mormon Michael Reynolds: “The Latter-day Saints . . . believe,” said President Young, “that Jesus is the Savior of the world; they believe that all who attain to any glory whatever, in any kingdom, will do so because Jesus has purchased it by his atonement.”

In fact, though, even fundamentalist Protestants believe that individual salvation depends on human will as well as on divine atonement—that is, unless they believe in predestination or universalism (or, perhaps, in universal damnation!). For, to be saved, people must accept Jesus as their Savior. If they reject him, they cannot receive salvation. Thus most fundamentalist Protestants have already conceded that human initiative or action is required for salvation and, with that in mind, their ability to consistently attack the Latter-day Saints on this matter is seriously compromised.

And if most evangelicals unwittingly allow that at least one “work”—our assent—is required for our salvation, thus drawing closer to the position of the Latter-day Saints, the Latter-day

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167 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 29. The claim that, according to Latter-day Saint doctrine, “all men will enter one of these kingdoms” is, strictly speaking, untrue. The “sons of perdition” will be excluded from any and all kingdoms of glory, as Mr. Reynolds himself notes in the sentence just preceding the quoted passage.

168 Compare Doctrine and Covenants 88:104. The promise of this future event figures prominently in Latter-day Saint temple worship.

169 Discourses of Brigham Young, 30.
Saints in their turn certainly confess their dependence on the atonement of Jesus Christ. The Book of Mormon insists that “we are saved by grace” (as at 2 Nephi 25:23). But, as usual, our Southern Baptist guides refuse to admit the Book of Mormon as evidence for what Latter-day Saints believe. Accordingly, with almost unendurable chutzpah, as John L. Smith and Michael Reynolds outline a method for luring Latter-day Saints away from their faith, they suggest that would-be “soulwinners” have the Mormon read Mosiah 27:24–28. “Remind the Mormon that he or she must have a new birth in order to become a child of God (v. 25b).” So far so good. No knowledgeable Latter-day Saint has not read this passage, and no orthodox one would dispute it. “This strongly contradicts Mormonism,” say Smith and Reynolds.170 They are absolutely wrong. Still, they advise their audience, “Remind him or her that this is his or her book.”171 Precisely.

Rather oddly, Michael Reynolds uses the story of the rich young ruler in Luke 18:18–27 to argue that works are not required for salvation.172 Yet Jesus never said anything of the sort, in that story or anywhere else. Indeed, he asked the young man to do something that was, for that would-be disciple, very difficult:

And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?
And Jesus said unto him . . .
Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother.
And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up.
Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me.
And when he heard this, he was very sorrowful: for he was very rich. (Luke 18:18–27)

170 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 75.
171 In ibid., 74.
When the ruler asked Jesus what he had to do to be saved, the Savior told him to do something. This should not be difficult to understand. And when the final prayer in the SBC pamphlet “A Closer Look at the Mormon Plan of Salvation” directs its reader to call on Jesus, saying “Please become the Lord of my life,” Latter-day Saints can surely be pardoned for thinking that an invitation of this type implies a promise of obedience. What else could it mean to recognize someone as your Lord and Master, if it does not mean that you intend to follow that person’s orders?

And it is clear, frankly, that there is one work, one human action, that our Baptist critics do regard, however inconsistently, as essential for our salvation: “If for some reason you should trust a Jesus other than the one who is revealed in the New Testament,” says Michael Reynolds, “then your trust is in vain, even if by some chance the rest of your theology is intact... [T]here is no hope for those who trust in this different Jesus.”

Obviously, in Reynolds’s view, theological error is the one unforgivable sin. And theological rectitude is the one indispensable work. In order to be saved, one must not only trust in Jesus, but one must reject teachings about him with which Michael Reynolds disagrees. For it would be impossible to mount a convincing argument that the Mormon Jesus is literally, physically, distinct from the Jesus of the New Testament. But does anybody have a fully adequate conception of Jesus? Did the ancient, illiterate Christian peasant? Does the modern Catholic, who believes that Jesus had no half brothers or half sisters? Which is the biblical view of Jesus? Is he the Byzantine pantocrator of the mosaics at Ravenna and Constantinople? The humble shepherd of the Roman catacombs? How much error is permissible? Will Jesus not save those who call on him in sincerity and faith, even if they misconceive him? Is it plausible to believe that he will save murderers and fornicators and greedy televangelists, but will thrust into hell those who, seeking to know him, misinterpreted a few passages in their Bible?

Not all evangelicals or fundamentalists are so exclusivist as to believe that he will. Consider, for instance, this statement, made on

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1 June 1997 by one of the most beloved and wise of all conservative Protestants, Billy Graham:

The Body of Christ comes from all Christian groups around the world, or outside the Christian groups. I think everybody who loves Christ, or knows Christ, whether they are conscious of it or not, they are members of the Body of Christ. That’s what God is doing today: He is calling people out of the world for his name, whether they come from the Muslim world or the Buddhist world or the Christian world or the non-believing world, they are members of the Body of Christ because they have been called by God. They may not even know the name of Jesus, but they know in their heart that they need something that they don’t have and they turn to the only light that they have, and I think that they are saved and that they are going to be with us in heaven.175

This generous and optimistic view of the love of God is completely, chillingly, absent from the curricular materials that the Southern Baptist Convention has prepared to deal with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

**Baptists among the Heathen**

“As you attempt to witness [to] Mormons,” writes Michael Reynolds, “it is helpful to understand that even though they believe their god is the same as the God of the Bible, this is not so. ... They claim to worship the God of the Bible but are, for the most part, ignorant of the God of Christianity.” Reynolds cites Paul’s sermon to the pagans on Mars Hill in Athens as a model for approaching “those who,” like the Latter-day Saints, “worship another god.”176 (He badly misunderstands Paul’s remarks, though, for at Acts 17:23 the apostle expressly acknowledged that the people of Athens did worship the God he proclaimed, and he

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175 Reported in *Context* 29/19 (1 November 1997): 4-5.
then went on to cite pagan Greek poets, with approval, as evidence for his argument.)

Of course, Reynolds realizes that his assertion will be offensive and insulting to many Latter-day Saints. “Many Mormons,” he says, “will claim that you are attacking them because you maintain that Christianity has a different God from Mormonism.”177 And indeed, Reynolds’s claim instantly becomes a certainty, such that Latter-day Saint resistance to so obvious a cosmic truth can only be explained psychologically: “Many Mormons,” Reynolds reveals, “are threatened by the fact that Christians have a different God.”178

As evidence for their important claim that Latter-day Saints worship a different God than “Christians” do, the experts employed by the Southern Baptist Convention offer several very dubious reasons. Michael Reynolds declares that the restored Church of Jesus Christ worships “a god who is nothing more than a man.”179 But, of course, it is difficult to imagine any sane and informed Latter-day Saint who would agree to that statement. And it hardly seems plausible to describe a morally perfect, omniscient, holy, immortal being who can create worlds, raise the dead, and travel instantaneously across vast distances, the unmitigated glory of whom is enough to incinerate ordinary mortals, as “nothing more than a man.”

Francis Beckwith sees the supposed difference in the manner of divine creation. “Unlike a god who forms the universe out of preexistent matter,” he says, “the God of the Bible created the universe ex nihilo (out of nothing).”180 But Beckwith is almost certainly wrong, for the best recent scholarship on the doctrine of creation ex nihilo indicates that the notion that God created the universe out of nothing is postbiblical and not to be found in either the Old or New Testament.181

177 Ibid., 18.
178 Ibid.
179 Ibid., 25.
180 Beckwith, “The Mormon Concept of God.”
Beckwith also wants to argue that the difference rests in the Mormon assertion of an anthropomorphic God, as opposed to the immaterial God of mainstream Christianity. But his careless phrasing gets him into trouble on this point: "God is . . . incorporeal," he declares. "Unlike humans, God is not uniquely associated with one physical entity (i.e., a body)."  

But this seems to deny the incarnation of Christ. If God was not in some sense "uniquely associated" with the physical entity identifiable as the body of Jesus of Nazareth, one of the central claims of Christianity would appear to be false. Surely, though, Beckwith has not chosen a Southern Baptist pamphlet to announce his apostasy from Christian belief. He must have something else in mind. But it is difficult to know just what it might be. Does he mean to brand the earthly advent of Jesus as a mere charade? Is he claiming that the Son shed his body after his resurrection? What biblical evidence is there for such a claim? And what would be the point of an on-again, off-again resurrection?

Robert McKay says that, "According to Mormonism, the statement [that 'There is one God, and only one God'] is simply not true."  

Here, some uninformed Latter-day Saints may unfortunately be inclined to agree with him. But to do so, they must not only ignore the clear testimony of the Bible but, with McKay, must avert their eyes from modern revelation, which declares with the Bible that, at least in a very important sense, there truly is only one God (see 2 Nephi 31:21; Mosiah 15:4; Alma 11:44; 3 Nephi 11:36; Mormon 7:7; D&C 20:28). "I and my Father are one," said the Savior, declaring further that "the Father is in me" (John 10:30, 38). "Christians," says Michael Reynolds, "believe that there is one God revealed as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit."  

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182 Beckwith, "The Mormon Concept of God."
184 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 2.
But so do the Mormons—especially if the Book of Mormon is admitted as evidence for their beliefs—since they, too, are Christians. Even John L. Smith and Michael Reynolds recognize that the oneness of God is taught in the last sentence of "The Testimony of Three Witnesses," as well as in passages such as Alma 11:22, 28–29, 38–39 (although they seek to use this as a weapon against the faith of the Latter-day Saints).185 In this regard, as in all other respects, Latter-day Saints are manifestly Christians.

What evokes the wrath of the SBC’s experts is the fact that Mormons do not accept the doctrine of the metaphysical or ontological Trinity as it is found in the classical creeds, preferring, rather, to interpret the “oneness” of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost in a different fashion. This is a freedom afforded them by the New Testament, if not by the Southern Baptist Convention. For “the formulation of ‘one God in three Persons’ was not solidly established, certainly not fully assimilated into Christian life and its profession of faith, prior to the end of the 4th century. . . . Among the Apostolic Fathers, there had been nothing even remotely approaching such a mentality or perspective.”186 “The formal doctrine of the Trinity as it was defined by the great church councils of the fourth and fifth centuries is not to be found in the NT.”187 Christian thinkers wrestled with this issue for many centuries. The classic solution, for most of mainstream Christianity, was reached via negotiations and debates in the great councils that were convened over several centuries following the death of the apostles and their disciples. Borrowing concepts from the era’s most advanced thought, Greek philosophy, Christian theologians attempted to describe the unity-in-multiplicity of the Godhead in terms of metaphysics and ontology. Latter-day Saints, by contrast, under the guidance of modern prophets and apostles, have seen the unity of the Godhead in the absolute oneness of purpose and will that characterize Father, Son, and Holy Ghost,

185 In ibid., 74.
which oneness Jesus sought to establish among his disciples generally. In his famous high priestly prayer, the Savior implored “That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us . . . that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one” (John 17:21–23).

Robert McKay gets himself into trouble when he tries to spell out, for his unsuspecting audience, the supposed implications of the alleged Mormon doctrine he has just sketched for them: “Viewing the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit as three gods, Mormonism of necessity does not regard all three Persons as God. When Mormons speak of ‘God’ they almost always mean the Father; only rarely is the term applied to the Son and never to the Holy Ghost.”

Still, his friend Michael Reynolds agrees with him on this point, saying that Latter-day Saints teach of “a Jesus who is less than God.”

Here again, though, we have a case of the Southern Baptist experts ignoring the Book of Mormon, and then rebuking the Latter-day Saints for failing to believe what, on the basis of their belief in and study of the Book of Mormon, they in fact do believe. Its title page announces that the Book of Mormon was written “to the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.” Astoundingly, John L. Smith and Michael H. Reynolds attempt to use the Book of Mormon against the Latter-day Saints on this issue. They cite precisely that passage from the title page, as well as Mosiah 15:1–5 with its very “high” christology, and then offer the following advice to Baptists attempting to seduce a Latter-day Saint away from the restored Church of Jesus Christ: “Remind him or her that this is his or her book. It is supposed to contain no error.” There is no problem of translation.

But Robert McKay does have a point when he notes that Latter-day Saints tend to use the term God rather differently of

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189 Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 25; compare “Patterns in the Cults.”
190 By whom this is supposed, they do not say. The Book of Mormon makes no such claim.
191 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 74.
the Holy Ghost and of Jesus than they do of God the Father. Fortunately, in doing so, they are very much in accord with the Bible and early Christianity.

The New Testament Gospels record several statements from Jesus indicating that he saw himself as separate from, and subordinate to, God the Father (e.g., at John 14:28; also Matthew 20:23; 26:39; John 5:19; 8:17–18; 17:1–5). In its opening verses, John’s Gospel appears to distinguish between the Father, who is “the God” (ho theós), and the Son, who is “God” (theós). The apostle Paul, indeed, occasionally reserved the term God uniquely for the Father (as at I Corinthians 8:6). Yet Jesus, too, is divine (John 1:1; 20:28). The apostle Paul wrote of Christ that “in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily” (Colossians 2:9).

And what of the third member of the Godhead? Robert McKay devotes an entire chapter to Mormonism’s supposed misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Holy Ghost or Holy Spirit, although, rather strangely, he admits that it isn’t important. “It is not common for this error to arise in witnessing or teaching situations. I cannot recall a single instance where it entered a conversation I had with a Mormon, and it certainly is not a crucial point in witnessing. However, it is an example of Mormonism’s non-divine nature.”

But how clear is the Bible itself and the evidence of early Christianity on the precise nature of the Holy Ghost? “It must be asked . . .,” wrote John Henry Newman, how much direct and literal testimony the Antenicene Fathers give, one by one, to the divinity of the Holy Spirit? This alone shall be observed, that St. Basil, in the fourth century, finding that, if he distinctly called the Third Person in the Blessed Trinity by the Name of God, he should be put out of the Church by the Arians, pointedly refrained from doing so on an occasion on which his enemies were on the watch; and that, when some Catholics found fault with him, St. Athanasius took his part.

\[192\] In ibid., 11.
“The Latter-day Saints possess a small god,” says Michael Reynolds, “who can only be in one place at a time due to his physical limitations. Christians worship a God who is in control of the entire universe, yet cares about each person individually at the same time.” Note Reynolds’s loaded language. Mormons, he tells his readers, “possess” a “god,” while “Christians” are said to “worship” a “God.” And would any even moderately knowledgeable Latter-day Saint really accept his first statement, or disagree with the content of the second? There is no logical contradiction, nor any immediately obvious theological contradiction, between being spatially limited, on the one hand, and controlling the universe and caring for individuals on the other. If there were, Jesus could not be divine.

God Became Man So That Man Can . . . Play the Harp

“One of the least known doctrines of the Mormon church,” writes Robert McKay, “is eternal progression. Mormon missionaries will not tell you much if anything about it, because it is so contrary to Christian teaching.” As a matter of fact, of course, a doctrine of human deification has been common to many strands of Christian thinking, even if it is not commonly taught in the recent minority faction of Christendom called Protestantism. “One can think what one wants,” wrote the German Lutheran church historian Ernst W. Benz,

of this doctrine of progressive deification, but one thing is certain: with this anthropology Joseph Smith is

195 In ibid., 39.
closer to the view of man held by the Ancient Church than the precursors of the Augustinian doctrine of original sin were, who considered the thought of such a substantial connection between God and man as the heresy, par excellence.  

But, protests Tal Davis, "the Bible nowhere teaches that people can become gods. The only biblical character who even suggested such a notion was the serpent (the devil) in Genesis 3:5." Davis fails to mention to his readers that, just a few verses later, in Genesis 3:22, God himself confirms the accuracy of what the devil had said. "The Bible says nothing whatsoever about men becoming gods," declares Robert McKay. But McKay omits 2 Peter 1:4, which promises that believers will be "partakers of the divine nature." Nor does he seem to remember that the Bible describes the followers of Christ as "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17) and offers them the prospect of sharing the throne with the risen and glorified Son of God (see Revelation 3:21; compare Galatians 4:7). Still, even if the Southern Baptist Convention's experts have failed to notice such language, not all Protestants have been so unobservant. As the seventeenth-century Anglican thinker Ralph Cudworth remarked,

The Gospel is nothing else but God descending into the world in our form and conversing with us in our likeness that he might allure and draw us up to God and make us partakers of his divine form, *theos gegonen anthrôpos* (as Athanasius speaks) *hina hēmas en eautō theopoíēsei;* "God was therefore incarnated and made man that he might deify us"; that is (as St Peter expresseth it) makes us partakers of the divine nature.  

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200 One might also mention Psalm 8:5; 82:6; Matthew 5:48; John 10:34; Acts 17:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 John 3:2.  
201 Cited in Allchin, *Participation in God,* 14.
"All is Well in Zion"

On the Latter-day Saint declaration that there was an apostasy of the early Christian church, Michael Reynolds tells his audience that "There is no historic evidence to verify this Mormon claim." But this is a rather peculiar statement to come from a Protestant, since only an apostasy from primitive Christian belief and practice could possibly justify the Protestant Reformation, with all the blood, turmoil, social dislocation, and hatred that accompanied it. In claiming that there was no apostasy, Reynolds takes a position more consistent with Roman Catholic belief than with his own apparent ecclesiological views. And Catholic historians have made exactly the claim, against Protestants, that Reynolds now trots out against the Latter-day Saints. "So much must the Protestant grant," wrote John Henry Newman (who would later become a cardinal of the church of Rome),

that if such a system of doctrine as he would now introduce ever existed in early times, it has been clean swept away as if by a deluge, suddenly, silently, and without memorial; by a deluge coming in a night, and utterly soaking, rotting, heaving up, and hurrying off every vestige of what it found in the Church, before cock-crowing."

Yet Newman certainly recognized important differences between the Christianity of the nineteenth century and the Christianity of the apostles and their first followers. The fundamental problem that he faced, and that his brilliant work in ecclesiastical history sought to solve, was what he acknowledged to be "a want of accord between the early and the late aspects of Christianity." It is on this very "want of accord" that Latter-day Saint scholars have concentrated. But, characteristically, Michael Reynolds ignores a considerable and impressive body of Latter-day Saint writing on just this issue, including:

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204 Ibid., 51.

"The true church of Jesus Christ has had an ongoing presence and witness in the world since Pentecost," asserts one of the Mormon Puzzle brochures. "Jesus Christ promised that His church, true baptized and regenerate believers, would not fail (Matt. 16:17–18)."205 The first sentence is a historical claim. It should be tested by historical means, yet no historical evidence is cited and the brochure fails to acknowledge the Latter-day Saint arguments mounted against the claim. The second sentence makes an assertion about Matthew 16:17–18 that can be checked against the actual text of that passage.

And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Bar-jona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

Even on the most generous reading, only the last portion of the second verse has any relevance to the brochure’s claim. And, even there, nothing supports a definition of the church as some vague, invisible group of “true baptized and regenerate believers” rather than an observable institution. But what does it mean

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205 "Belief Bulletin: Mormons."
to say that “the gates of hell” will not prevail against the church? Is it really a guarantee against apostasy?

In order to use Matthew 16:18 as a proof text against the Latter-day Saint teaching of a universal falling away of early Christianity, one must take it to mean something like “The powers of evil will not overcome the church.” The word hell, then, has to be taken as referring to a place of evil and torment, the realm and headquarters of Lucifer. But the word rendered in the King James Version as hell is the Greek Hades. However, Hades is not hell; it is simply the general destination of all the dead, the righteous and the unrighteous. It is exactly equivalent to the Hebrew Sheol,206 and denotes what Latter-day Saints term “the spirit world.” It is not evil, nor is it, as a whole, under the control of evil. In classical Greek, Hades was the name of the god of the realm of the dead, also known as Pluto, the son of Kronos and the brother of Zeus. He was a grim fellow, it is true, but he is never depicted as evil. In the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament, the word hades refers to “death” or “the grave,” and has no moral connotation one way or the other.207

So the promise of Matthew 16:18 is not that the powers of evil will not overcome the church, since the spirit world is all-inclusive and thus is morally neutral, but that the powers of death will not overcome the church. And the peculiar reference to the “gates” of the spirit world indicates that the power resident in the church will extend through and beyond the portals of death.208 This promise is perfectly appropriate to the context of the verse, which relates the story of the granting of priesthood sealing keys to Peter. Thus, far from being an argument against Mormon belief in a “Great Apostasy,” Matthew 16 is a charter for the great work of redeeming the dead under the keys of the priesthood as they are granted to apostles and prophets.

206 See the discussion on She’ol, in Laurentino J. Afonso, “Netherworld,” in Encyclopaedia Judaica, 12:996–97.
207 As at 1 Samuel 2:6 (which, in the Septuagint, is 1 Kings 2:6).
208 See my discussion on the harrowing of hell in “Skin Deep,” 131–38.
Miscellaneous Theological Distortions

• “The Jesus of Mormonism,” Rev. John L. Smith suggests to his hapless readers, “was not necessarily sinless. . . . Perhaps . . . the Jesus of Mormonism was required to sin in order to progress to godhood.”209 Perhaps! Perhaps my dog can do calculus too. Perhaps Elvis is hiding in your basement. Rev. Smith does not trouble himself to offer even one reference in support of this wildly irresponsible insinuation. And, while his allegation is so drastically inaccurate as, from a certain perspective, to merit no response, it will serve as a sparkling example of the carelessness—indeed, of the recklessness—with which the Southern Baptist Convention’s curricular materials on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have been composed. Following is a list of a few Latter-day Saint sources—and, undoubtedly, there are many more—that expressly contradict John L. Smith’s baseless charge:

Doctrine and Covenants 20:22; 45:3–5.
Hymns of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, nos. 188, 190, 195. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1985.


• The Latter-day Saint view of Jesus, says the Rev. Smith, is that “He was no more the son of God than any of the other billions of God’s children.” But surely no informed Latter-day Saint would ever consent to such a statement.

• “Celestial marriage is a priesthood ordinance,” J. E. Cook observes, “making the woman dependent on her husband for exaltation.” The first part of his statement is correct, but the second part, though a nice try at anti-Mormon feminism, is both a *non sequitur* and entirely misleading. Celestial marriage is required of both men and women for entrance into the highest degree of the celestial kingdom, which logically entails that men are exactly as dependent on women in this regard as women are on men. As Paul puts it, “neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord” (1 Corinthians 11:11).

• “The doctrine of baptism for the dead is based mainly on the interpretation of two passages of Scripture,” writes Ken James, who identifies these passages as 1 Corinthians 15:29 and 1 Peter 3:19. But he is wrong. Although these two biblical verses provide useful corroboration for Latter-day Saint belief and practice, the restored Church of Jesus Christ does not rely on isolated

210 In ibid., 6.
211 In ibid., 35.
212 In ibid., 47.
scriptural passages for its doctrine of salvation for the dead. It reli­lies on and rejoices in modern revelation from God. “We must,” says James, “discount any extra-biblical revelations as being false, and of no value to us in determining our beliefs and in shaping the expressions of our faith.”\textsuperscript{213} Well, perhaps Ken James must. But, like the earliest Christians, the Latter-day Saints are willing to listen whenever God speaks.

- “Mormon scholars are divided,” according to James, “on whether the person in spirit prison has the free will to either accept or reject the offer of salvation.”\textsuperscript{214} A reference or two might have helped here. I have never heard any dispute on this question, in all my years of experience in the church. And I can think of no reason at all why people would forfeit their free will merely because of the accident of death.

- John L. Smith contrasts the Word of Wisdom, as it is observed by the Latter-day Saints, with “the fruit of the Spirit,” as it is described by Paul in Galatians 5:22–23—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. He supplies no reason for anybody to imagine that they are mutually exclusive, as if the Latter-day Saints deliberately choose the lesser benefits of health and sobriety over the gifts of the Spirit.\textsuperscript{215} Must one smoke to be gentle? Can one not be patient without whiskey?

- “Hebrews 1:1–2 tells us,” writes Michael Reynolds, “that God used to speak through the prophets and now he communicates with His people through Jesus Christ.”\textsuperscript{216} But Latter-day Saints understand that, at least since the fall, the Father has virtually always spoken to humankind through his Son. The unmediated voice of the Father heard at the baptism of Jesus and the Mount of Transfiguration, and the direct appearance of the Father in the grove in 1820, are spectacular exceptions to this rule that, by their very exceptionality, underscore the unparalleled significance of, first, the commencement of the earthly ministry of the Son of God and, second, the inauguration of the last gospel dispensation.

\textsuperscript{213} In ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{214} In ibid., 47, emphasis in the original.
\textsuperscript{215} See ibid., 66.
\textsuperscript{216} Reynolds, Sharing the Faith with Your Mormon Friends, 21.
And Latter-day Saints see no reason, certainly none in Hebrews 1:1–2, to believe that he has ceased to use prophets to convey his message. Since there were prophets in the early Christian church during and after the period of the writing of Hebrews (see, e.g., Acts 13:1; 15:32; 21:10; 1 Corinthians 12:28; Ephesians 2:20; 3:5; 4:11), it seems very unlikely that the author of Hebrews meant to say that there could be no prophets after the coming of Christ. Unless, that is, we are supposed to jettison Acts, 1 Corinthians, and Ephesians from the biblical canon. And what about Amos 3:7?

- "The Jesus of Mormonism is a brother to Lucifer," says John L. Smith, repeating a currently fashionable anti-Mormon mantra.217 If Rev. Smith means to imply that Lucifer’s kinship with Jesus (and with us) leads Latter-day Saints to regard Satan with affection or sympathy, he is acting the part of a demagogue. Whatever his motive, however, he does not explain how—since, according to Job 1:6 and 2:1, Satan is apparently a son of God—a believer in the Bible is supposed to avoid the conclusion that, in some sense, at least, Jesus the Son of God and Satan the son of God are brothers. Moreover, although this item of Latter-day Saint belief is clearly used by Rev. Smith for its shock value, it isn’t clear how making Lucifer, the author of Auschwitz and the Cambodian killing fields, the voluntary creation of an all-knowing and all-powerful God is really an improvement over viewing him as a son of our Heavenly Father who went horribly, tragically wrong. To argue that the Father freely, knowingly, created Lucifer ex nihilo implicates God directly in all the unspeakable evils of the Gulag, the Ukrainian terror-famine, the Assyrian conquests, and the wars of Atilla the Hun. We do not hold a father legally or morally responsible for a properly raised child who goes astray. But we would certainly condemn an inventor who deliberately created a serial-murdering robot and then, having loosed it on the world, refused to throw the off switch.

- Responding to Latter-day Saint belief in the eternity of temple marriage covenants, Tal Davis writes that “LDS doctrine contrasts with Jesus’ teaching that marital relationships are not intended to continue past death, there being no need for such

relationships in heaven (Matt. 22:30; Mark 12:25; Luke 20:34–36).”

But none of the passages he cites negates the need for family relationships in heaven. What they say is that, in the resurrection, no weddings will be performed—no “marrying” (the traditional male role) and no “being given in marriage” (the traditional female role). But that no more bars the continuation of marriage relationships in heaven than a ban on performing marriages in some sort of building (a meat-packing plant, say, or a nuclear power station) would forbid married people from entering it. It is precisely the Latter-day Saint understanding that marriage is an ordinance to be performed on earth that leads them, under guidance from modern revelation, to the practice of vicarious marriage sealings for the dead.

• “A test of genuineness for prophets,” says one of the SBC brochures, “was that any prediction they proclaimed would come true (Deut. 18:20–22). For example, Joseph Smith predicted that the temple of the church would be built in Independence, Mo., within his lifetime (Doctrine and Covenants 84:2–5). No temple has been built there.”

What a difference accuracy makes! Doctrine and Covenants 84:4 does not say that the temple would be built within his lifetime, but, rather, “reared in this generation.” The question is, What is meant by the term generation? If the SBC’s experts want to insist that it means a literal human generation of about thirty years or so, what will they do with the prophecies of the last days and the second coming of Christ in Matthew 24? For Jesus said of those events, “This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled” (Matthew 24:34). Remember, double standards are tacky.

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218 In ibid., 28. The producers of the Mormon Puzzle material should be congratulated for avoiding the approach to this subject of Mark Coppenger, the president of Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, who told the SBC’s 1997 Denominational Summit on Mormonism that the faith of the Latter-day Saints is “a designer religion which appeals to today’s American lifestyle.” “It’s bombastic,” he told his audience, “claiming ‘you can be a god’ . . . and it’s sensual . . . a religion of eternal sex, which is easy to sell in America.” See King. “Mormon summit preps for ’98 SBC.” Perhaps the emphasis in the missionary lessons has changed a bit since my days in Switzerland, but I don’t recall spending a lot of time on a doctrine of “eternal sex.”

219 “Belief Bulletin: Mormons.”
Miscellaneous Historical Distortions

- “With Smith’s death came disarray,” says Robert McKay. “Sidney Rigdon and Brigham Young, two of Smith’s closest advisors, battled for leadership of the church.”220 But it wasn’t much of a fight, and it didn’t last long. McKay paints a picture of chaos and strife that simply is not historically accurate. Moreover, there is clear and abundant historical evidence of dramatic divine intervention at Nauvoo to ensure that the Saints recognized Brigham Young as the legitimate successor to Joseph Smith.221

- Lavoid Robertson says of the glorious beings whom the Prophet saw in his first vision that “whether they were angels, Jesus, or Jesus and God the Father, we don’t know—Joseph Smith seems to have been confused about this.”222 He offers no evidence to back up this offhanded claim, and I would suggest that the confusion is his, rather than Joseph Smith’s.

- Acknowledging the presence of any truth in other religions is, Robertson tells us, directly contradictory “to the original teachings of Joseph Smith.”223 This is completely false. He cites no reference to support his claim, and it is easy to see why. “The Catholics have many pieces of truth,” said President John Taylor.224 “Have the Presbyterians any truth?” asked Joseph Smith. “Yes. Have the Baptists, Methodists, etc., any truth? Yes.”225

- Latter-day Saint belief in celestial marriage rests, says Tal Davis, on notions “concocted” or “designed by [Joseph] Smith to justify his personal moral failings.”226 This is a very serious charge to make. Some supporting evidence and analysis would have been useful. But it isn’t immediately apparent in any case

223 In ibid.
225 *History of the Church*, 5:517.
how belief in the eternally binding validity of marriage covenants could have been used to justify adultery.

• One of the SBC pamphlets declares, in passing, that “The Book of Abraham has been discredited by Egyptologists examining the Egyptian papyri from which Smith derived his ‘inspired’ translation.”\(^\text{227}\) The pamphlet neglects to mention the fact that we almost certainly don’t have “the Egyptian papyri from which Smith derived his ‘inspired’ translation,” and that it is therefore unclear just how the Egyptologists managed to discredit it. Nor, needless to say, does the pamphlet mention Latter-day Saint scholarship on the issue.\(^\text{228}\)

“We were able to put the Mormon puzzle together,” boasts the narrator at the end of the SBC’s video. Sure. And I’m Napoleon.

**Fuel on the Fire of the *Auto-da-Fé***

The Mormon Puzzle material consistently downplays the role and importance of anti-Mormon bigotry in the story of the Latter-day Saints—“a pattern of religious persecution and violence without parallel in American history.”\(^\text{229}\) Perhaps the SBC

\(^{227}\) Davis, “A Closer Look at the Book of Mormon.”


\(^{229}\) Givens, *Viper on the Hearth*, 42. The sordid and sometimes bloody story of anti-Mormonism is yet to be fully written. Worthwhile treatments to date include Gary L. Bunker and Davis Bitton, *The Mormon Graphic Image, 1834–1914: Cartoons, Caricatures, and Illustrations* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1983); David B. Davis, “Some Themes of Counter-Subversion: An Analysis of Anti-Masonic, Anti-Catholic, and Anti-Mormon Literature,” *The
authors are embarrassed at the palpable link that connects them to the anti-Mormonism of an earlier era.

Regarding the flight of the Latter-day Saints from armed mobs in Jackson County, Missouri, in November 1833, for example, Robert McKay summarizes the situation by saying merely that “the Mormons had again proven incapable of getting along with their neighbors and had been driven from Jackson County.” But, to put it mildly, this is not the whole story. (What would we think of a writer who, after mentioning the persecution of Jews in medieval Europe, the Spanish Inquisition, and the Russian pogroms, introduced the Nazis’ “Final Solution” with a detached observation that “the Jews had again proven incapable of getting along with their neighbors and had been relocated to labor camps”?) Local Missouri clergy were hostile to the Latter-day Saints almost from the arrival of the first Mormon missionaries in the area in January 1831; Latter-day Saint proselytizing successes alarmed them. “Almost as soon as the members of the Church commenced settling in Jackson County [in 1833],” Joseph Fielding Smith summarizes,
Opposition began to show itself. The settlers were incited to violence by their ministers, who started a campaign of abuse and falsehood. They received ready aid from others of the citizens, which ultimately resulted in the expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from the state. The Rev. Finis Ewing publicly distributed the report that “the ‘Mormons’ were the common enemies of mankind,” while the Rev. Pixley circulated falsehoods among the religious papers of the east, and used his influence among both the Indians and the whites for the destruction of the Church in Jackson County.  

McKay is likewise coy in connection with the final expulsion of the Latter-day Saints from the state, five years later. “On July 4, 1838,” he writes, “Sidney Rigdon, a powerful Mormon orator, delivered a preapproved speech threatening Missourians with extermination. Three months later the governor responded in kind, issuing an ‘exterminating order’ which said that the church’s members should either be driven from the state or exterminated.” But this is misguided on many levels. Even if we grant that Sidney Rigdon’s speech—which may or may not have been “preapproved”—was intemperate, can it truly be said that a formal state decree ordering the expulsion or extermination of a whole class of its citizens was really a proportionate, “in kind” response to a piece of Independence Day bombast? And why doesn’t McKay tell his readers what kinds of provocations led up to the Rigdon speech? His brief summary implies that Rigdon simply offered, out of the blue, to exterminate the people of Missouri. But this is not so. What did Sidney Rigdon actually say?

We take God and all the holy angels to witness this day, that we warn all men in the name of Jesus Christ, to come on us no more forever, for from this hour, we will bear it no more, our rights shall no more be trampled on with impunity. The man or the set of men, who attempts it, does it at the expense of their lives. And

233 In Reynolds, The Challenge of Mormonism, 18.
that mob that comes on us to disturb us; it shall be be-
tween us and them a war of extermination; for we will
follow them, till the last drop of their blood is spilled,
or else they will have to exterminate us: for we will
carry the seat of war to their own houses, and their own
families, and one party or the other shall be utterly
destroyed. . . .

We will never be the aggressors, we will infringe on
the rights of no people; but shall stand for our own unti-
d death. We claim our own rights, and are willing that
all others shall enjoy theirs. . . .

We therefore, take all men to record this day, that
we proclaim our liberty this day, as did our fathers.
And we pledge this day to one another, our fortunes,
our lives, and our sacred honors, to be delivered from
the persecutions which we have had to endure, for the
last nine years, or nearly that.234

There is nothing here of any threat against the generality of
Missourians. Rather, it is a promise of nonaggression, coupled
with a warning to the violent mobs that sought to murder, rape,
and despoil the Latter-day Saints. Nonetheless, Colleen Raison, a
professional anti-Mormon who runs a “visitors center” in Nau-
voo and publishes humorless, insulting, inartistic cartoons in
Reynolds’s old tabloid The Evangel, recently offered her own
perspective in that periodical on the unparalleled declaration of
genocidal war by a governor against a portion of the citizenry of
his state:

The Mormons, since their inception, have been noted
for crying persecution as the root of much and many
of their problems. Some incidents the early Saints went
through, as many other people did, possibly or actually,
may have been wrong.

But only maybe.

Ms. Raison quotes the language of Gov. Lilburn W. Boggs’s
27 October 1839 extermination order as follows: “The Mormons

must be treated as enemies, and must be exterminated as necessary for the public peace—their outrages are beyond all description.” She then hastens to provide sympathetic understanding:

The wording sounds very harsh and almost causes one to think the Mormons were indeed unfairly persecuted, as they claim. However, if one reads the actual history of the events that led up to this order, and not just Mormonism’s “faith promoting” materials, one would understand why it came about and why the leaders of the State, as well as the Governor, would think such an order necessary.

Ms. Ralson’s essay concludes by noting that the “extermination order” was finally rescinded by Governor Christopher S. Bond, on 25 June 1969, who also apologized on behalf of his state. “Now,” she says, “would it not be right for the Mormons to own up to their part of the wrong and ask the pardon of the people of the State of Missouri?”235 (One is left almost speechless. Even if Mormon behavior on the frontier had been thoroughly obnoxious, would that have justified their annihilation? Do improperly clad women deserve rape? Do Jews bear, or even share in, the guilt of the Holocaust? Should Jews apologize to Germany?

“You see everybody always talk about Hitler exterminating six million Jews,” says Khalid Abdul Muhammad, a leader in Louis Farrakhan’s Nation of Islam, “... don’t nobody ever ask what did they do to Hitler.”)236 “It is not as if the Mormons were the innocent victims of a cruel governor!” concurs Rev. Dennis A. Wright, who has succeeded Michael Reynolds as editor of The Evangel and director of Oklahoma-based Utah Missions, Inc.237

In October of 1838, the Latter-day Saints were forced to cede the town of De Witt, Missouri, to the mob forces. Seventy wagons filled with exiles and their possessions soon filed into Caldwell

County. But “violence again erupted a few weeks later, when a group of Caldwell militia led by Reverend Samuel Bogart raided a residence south of Far West and made off with three prisoners.”

238 Early in the next year, it was, again, certain kinds of Christian clergy who played a leading role in the suffering of the Latter-day Saints, as Joseph Smith pointed out to Isaac Galland in a letter from Liberty Jail, Missouri, dated 22 March 1839:

The Judges have gravely told us from time to time that . . . if we will deny our religion, we can be liberated. Our lawyers have gravely told us, that we are only held now by the influence of long faced Baptists; how far this is true, we are not able to say: but we are certain that our most vehement accusers, are the highest toned professors of religion. On being interogated [sic] what these men have done? their uniform answer is, we do not know, but they are false teachers, and ought to die. And of late boldly and frankly acknowledge, that the religion of these men, is all that they have against them. 239

In the view of Rev. Wright, who is an ordained minister in the Southern Baptist Convention, not even the murder of Joseph Smith was undeserved. He goes further, in this regard, than did the experts at the SBC’s Denominational Summit on Mormonism, which was held in North Carolina on the one hundred and fifty-third anniversary of the Prophet’s death. “Smith was killed while escaping jail,” they said, untruthfully. 240 Responding to some remarks made by President Gordon B. Hinckley, Pastor Wright notes that

the deaths of Joseph and Hyrum on June 27, 1844, didn’t occur until after Joseph had fired upon the so-

239 Dean C. Jesse, ed., The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 418.
240 King, “Mormon Summit Preps for ’98 SBC.”
called “mob” with a pistol that had been secreted to him while in jail and had killed one man and injured several others.241

“Rage and persecution” may have followed the Mormons to Illinois, but the Saints of that day brought most of it upon themselves!242

Rev. Wright is wrong about Hyrum’s death, which occurred immediately prior to Joseph’s drawing the pistol.243 But he is almost certainly correct in his claim that Joseph’s firing of the pistol took place while Joseph was still alive. His description of the events at Carthage represents an important and novel historical reconstruction, and it is vital that we understand it with precision. Apparently, Rev. Wright feels that Joseph Smith was obliged—though he was unjustly imprisoned and had not yet been tried, let alone convicted of anything, much less convicted of a capital offense—to allow “the so-called ‘mob’” to butcher not only himself and his brother Hyrum but his two friends, Willard Richards and John Taylor, whose only crime was that they had come to visit the prisoners. (John Taylor was, in fact, severely wounded by “the so-called ‘mob.’”)

241 Unfortunately, it is not likely that Joseph Smith really managed to kill one of his murderers. B. H. Roberts, ed., History of the Church (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 7:103, indicates that John Taylor had heard of two deaths; see also Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 390–91. But see also Brodie, No Man Knows My History; 393; Dallin H. Oaks and Marvin S. Hill, Carthage Conspiracy: The Trial of the Accused Assassins of Joseph Smith (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1975), 217–20; Donna Hill, Joseph Smith: The First Mormon (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1977), 415–16. I put the question to several leading academic experts on the history of the church, and the unanimous answer was that there is simply no evidence and no credible contemporary claim that Joseph Smith killed anybody. Justice, alas, was not done that day at Carthage.


Rev. Wright’s revised version of the events in Carthage seems to run along the following lines: The wily criminal lunatic Joseph Smith, who had remained quiet throughout his captivity, deliberately chose the very time when the peace-loving Carthage Greys—fully armed and with traditional blackened faces—were innocently gathered about the jail for their annual June 27th Militia Picnic. Frolicking with their weapons and calling out the death threats that customarily accompanied that grand holiday in frontier Illinois—it was a simpler time, and June 27th had not yet been commercialized—the proto-Gandhian Greys had merely been playing the venerable party game known among these gentle rustics as “Eat Hot Lead, Mormon Scum!” Then, wholly without provocation, Joseph Smith opened fire on the revelers, using the “pepperbox” pistol that Cyrus Wheelock had smuggled into his cell. Naive historians, both Latter-day Saints and others, have always assumed that Joseph’s action had something to do with the fact that his brother Hyrum had just been shot to death. (Presumably, Hyrum was killed by a stray bullet from a local hunter, or perhaps from an evil Mormon assassin.) Rev. Wright, however, cannot be taken in by such sophistries. When Joseph continued to shoot at them as they mounted the jail’s interior staircase bearing a peace offering of cookies and punch, they had no choice. They killed him and his (already dead) brother in self-defense. It is true that they also shot John Taylor at least four times. But then, he had been very naughty to them with his cane, and needed to be taught a lesson.

Rev. Wright is likewise unimpressed by the Latter-day Saints’ westward migration. “No one,” he protests, “followed the Mormons holding guns to their heads.”244 (This is, I suppose, literally true.) The narrator of the video Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints takes a similarly bland view of Mormon history and of Protestant anti-Mormonism’s role in it. “The people came here,” he says airily, standing on a hillside overlooking Salt Lake City, “to isolate themselves from those who disagreed with their beliefs.” True, but not the whole truth. Rather, as the pioneer generation and their children used to say,

"we came here willingly, because we had to."245 "Had not our neighbors in Missouri and Illinois made life intolerable to us," said Nephi Morris, "we would have remained among them to this day. Had not the sharp and incisive argument of the bayonet and the musket been resorted to this great western country would have been peopled by others, and in a very different manner than that which has occurred."246 Anybody who knows anything about Mormon history understands that the Latter-day Saints fled to the Great Basin because they were being slaughtered in Illinois. John Taylor, who, to the end of his life, carried lead in his body from the guns of the same murderers who shot the Prophet, put it well:

Joseph Smith . . . was persecuted and driven from place to place. He was maligned, vilified, scourged, tarred and feathered, and finally murdered in cold blood, by a mob with blackened faces, in violation of the pledge of protection of the governor of the State of Illinois. It may be asked, why are we here to day in these valleys of the mountains? Because we had to flee from Missouri to Illinois; from Illinois into these mountains, to seek for that protection among the savages of the plains which was denied us by the civilization of the age under the auspices of a boasted Christianity; and the same spirit of vilification, falsification and abuse still follows us.247

It surely does. The Salt Lake City Ministerial Alliance opposed the seating of B. H. Roberts as a Utah congressman in the House of Representatives, and the seating of Reed Smoot in the

245 The comment seems to have originated with George A. Smith, a nineteenth-century counselor in the First Presidency and the grandfather of President George Albert Smith. See George Albert Smith, Conference Report, April 1948, 13; George Albert Smith, Conference Report, October 1950, 155; Joseph Fielding Smith, Doctrines of Salvation (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1956), 3:347; compare Joseph F. Smith, in Collected Discourses, 2:342 (17 December 1891); Nephi L. Morris, Conference Report, April 1921, 91; Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, April 1921, 101; Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, October 1933, 19; Melvin J. Ballard, Conference Report, April 1938, 43.

246 Nephi L. Morris, Conference Report, April 1921, 91.

U.S. Senate. Certain members of the clergy have always been in the forefront of stirring up hatred against the Latter-day Saints:

On the second of October, 1881, the Reverend Thomas De Witt Talmage gave a sermon in the Brooklyn Tabernacle on the subject of President Garfield’s recent assassination. Attempting to console those shaken by the ineffectuality of their prayers for his recovery, he solaced them with the thought that “if the death of Garfield shall arouse the nation to more hatred of that institution of Mormonism, ... he will not have died in vain.” For though Talmage couldn’t be sure of the assassin’s affiliation, the villain clearly “had the ugliness of a Mormon, the licentiousness of a Mormon, the cruelty of a Mormon, the murderous spirit of a Mormon.”

The most recent surge of Baptist concern about the evils of Mormonism may perhaps be traceable to the construction of the Washington D.C. Temple, which signified in dramatic fashion the church’s escape from the western deserts to which earlier anti-Mormons had attempted to confine it. Worried Baptists in and around the District of Columbia held a conference on Mormonism, invited “experts” and Baptist officials from across the country, and distributed a ninety-page booklet on how to thwart any Latter-day Saint missionaries who dared to trespass on their turf. As the Washington Post reported in the spring of 1974,

248 Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 40. In fact, of course, although Rev. Talmage’s suspicions were soon demonstrated to be baseless, a murderous spirit has often accompanied the enemies of the Latter-day Saints, as events in the years immediately prior to and immediately following his remarks vividly illustrate. On the killing of Elder Joseph Standing by a “so-called ‘mob’” (to use Rev. Wright’s phrase) near Varnell, Georgia, in 1879, see David S. Hoopes and Roy Hoopes, The Making of a Mormon Apostle: The Story of Rudger Clawson (Lanham, Md.: Madison Books, 1990), 1-31. On the massacre of several missionaries and members by a “so-called ‘mob’” in the Kane Creek area of Tennessee in 1884, see Gary James Bergera, ed., The Autobiography of B. H. Roberts (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 139-42. It would be uncharitable to note that the American South is disproportionately represented in such stories, and that a leader of “the so-called ‘mob’” that killed Elder Standing was the Baptist deacon Benjamin Clark.
Baptists have watched with growing apprehension the progress of the new Mormon temple just off the Capital Beltway near Kensington. With the completion of the temple, they knew would come expansion of Mormon activities in this area, where Baptists of all varieties have more members than any other religious group.249

It cannot be forgotten that Protestantism began as a protest. Polemics and interreligious disputes have long been a part of its history and culture. And these disputes have sometimes been very ugly. Martin Luther, for instance, said of the Roman Catholic church that “all who have the spirit of Christ know well that they can bring no higher or more acceptable praise offering to God than all they can say or write against this bloodthirsty, unclean, blasphemous whore of the devil.”250 The Reformation launched a century of brutal religious wars.

This same charming spirit manifests itself against the Latter-day Saints as well. It was incorporated in the placard-wielding hecklers who pestered people emerging from a friend’s stake conference on 15 March 1998, near Portland, Oregon. It was vocal in a young man who, at a recent ecumenical prayer service held in conjunction with an academic conference, notified God that there was a Mormon in their midst—a colleague of mine—and summoned the Lord to save him from the false and Satanic cult to which he belonged. It is visible in the anti-Mormons who haunt every temple dedication and who confront the Saints annually at the church’s historical pageants in Manti, Palmyra, and Mesa. It is uncomfortably present when Latter-day Saint women are barred from praying in parent and political groups in California and Texas because they aren’t “Christians.” It grows aggressive when it bans the use, by Latter-day Saints, of interdenominational chapels in Cairo, Egypt, and Vail, Colorado. It grows eerily reminiscent of the Nazis’ Kristallnacht when a dedicated anti-Mormon seeks

250 Martin Luther, introduction to Robert Barnes’s History of the Popes, written in 1536. Cited in Givens, Viper on the Hearth, 113.
to destroy a young man's business through a religiously motivated boycott.\textsuperscript{251}

Of course, intolerance and fallen humanity's zest for denigrating those with whom we disagree are not limited to Protestants. Although we do not wish to slip into the opposite error of relativism, we must, all of us, be on our guard against these self-aggrandizing temptations. Reviewing a recently published volume by the noted Egyptologist Jan Assmann, on the image of ancient Egypt in western religious thought, Ronald Hendel writes that,

In the Western tradition, Egypt is the counterimage to the austere truth of Biblical monotheism.

Yet this "Mosaic distinction," as Assman calls it, between false religion (connoted by Egypt) and true, revealed religion, has its own problems, not the least of which is the intolerance that is often generated by labeling the other as deluded or irrational. The Mosaic distinction, though basic to Judaism, was also applied by Christianity (and later by Islam) to characterize the other as contemptible and potentially evil. So it was that the Jews became subjected to the Mosaic distinction by this new turn, the ugly history of anti-Semitism being its legacy. For Assmann, a German scholar writing in the generation after the Holocaust, these ancient religious controversies seem all too modern.\textsuperscript{252}

And indeed they do. As one leading professional anti-Mormon expresses it, "The very existence of the LDS Church is an insult to what I and millions of others hold dear."\textsuperscript{253} Just

\textsuperscript{251} Information on this case can be found in my "Skin Deep," 140–41.

\textsuperscript{252} Ronald Hendel, review of Moses the Egyptian: The Memory of Egypt in Western Monotheism, by Jan Assmann, Biblical Archaeology Review 24/2 (March/April 1998): 68.

\textsuperscript{253} William J. McKeever, director of Mormonism Research Ministry (El Cajon, California), in an E-mail message to Daniel C. Peterson (4 March 1998). In a similar vein, James R. White, of Phoenix-based Alpha and Omega Ministries, sent me an E-mail message on 15 April 1998 in which he explained that the sheer fact that Mormons accept the doctrines of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which doctrines disagree with his version of Christianity, makes them "anti-Baptists" and "anti-Christians" and, by implication, legitimates his career as a professional disdainer and critic of their
under twenty percent of “Conservative Christians,” according to a recent sociological study, “would deny Mormons residence in their country.”

The curriculum materials prepared by the Southern Baptist Convention distort and misrepresent the restored gospel. It is regrettable that a large and wealthy American religious denomination would officially issue such misleading and antagonistic propaganda as this video and this literature and would encourage its members to use it in formal instruction. Although these products are indisputably an improvement over the more inflammatory charlatanism of such cranks as Ed Decker, the SBC has forfeited a marvelous opportunity to further understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints among American evangelical Christians. Worse, I fear that the Mormon Puzzle materials feed contempt, anger, and hostility. To have done so, unfortunately, seems both harmful to life in a democratic community and, more troubling still, fundamentally unchristian.

faith. In his view, Latter-day Saints need not be particularly interested in Baptist or Protestant doctrines—very few are; I am not—and need never have campaigned against any other faith to be branded “anti-Baptist” and “anti-Christian.” That their beliefs differ from those of James White is a stench in his nostrils and, therefore, in the Lord’s.

Of Your Own Selves Shall Men Arise

On 20 April 1974 members of the Mormon History Association gathered in Nauvoo, Illinois, to hear Reed C. Durham Jr. deliver a paper entitled “Is There No Help for the Widow’s Son?” In this lecture Dr. Durham, the association’s president at the time, agreed with the anti-Mormon allegation that Joseph Smith plagiarized ritual elements from Freemasonry and used them to create the endowment ceremony for the Nauvoo Temple. The anti-Mormon community was overjoyed at this presentation, while Dr. Durham’s LDS colleagues were stunned and called his faith and good sense into question. Dr. Durham felt that perhaps his lecture had been misunderstood, so he sent a candid letter to each of the meeting’s participants attempting to clarify his position on this issue. His memorandum is insightful because it outlines how an otherwise careful scholar came to accept a very problematic point of view. From his letter we learn that (1) Dr. Durham had spent only a few months in researching his subject, (2) he was “not skillful” in handling his material, and (3) he was not sufficiently “erudite” in the matter.2


2 “To Whom It May Concern,” signed by Reed C. Durham Jr., no date, one page, copy in reviewer’s possession. Erudition is defined as “knowledge acquired by study or research,” in *Random House Webster’s Dictionary*, 1996 ed., 221.
For a long time it seemed that the Reed Durham incident was just a singular aberration by a sincere researcher who was trying to understand one of the puzzles of the past. But in recent years a number of publications have sprung up on the fringes of Mormonism that champion the very same anti-Mormon theory abandoned by Dr. Durham. The Mysteries of Godliness, by David John Buerger, is just one of the latest attempts by the "folk of the fringe" to discredit the message of the restoration by questioning the divine authenticity of Latter-day Saint temple rites.

The subtitle of Buerger’s book declares that it is “A History of Mormon Temple Worship,” and a quick glance at the table of contents seems to justify such a claim. But one only has to read the author’s preface in order to see that he has a rather large ax to grind. He has been offended by “enthusiastic apologists” who

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have, in his opinion, made “exaggerated claims about the temple and its origins” (p. viii). He has therefore taken it upon himself to correct these unnamed enthusiasts by “providing a history of the endowment, its origins and development” (p. ix).

It is not until chapter 3, however, that Buerger reveals that his position on temple “origins” is the same as that long held by anti-Mormons. Buerger seems to realize that he is going to have a difficult time converting the LDS populace to this particular point of view. In an attempt to make his argument sound more credible, he reassures readers that his book will employ a “balance of scholarly objectivity, reverence for the sacred, regard for the sensibilities of others, and adequate documentation” (p. viii). This review will compare these promises with the actual content of the book.

**Regard for the Sensibilities of Others**

Buerger correctly notes in his preface that “some readers may feel that any discussion of [temple] ceremonies is inappropriate given their sacred nature [and also because] certain aspects of the ritual are guarded by vows of secrecy” (p. viii). Even though he acknowledges that “those who enter the temple agree to treat the ceremony with respect” (p. vii) and claims that he does not want to “offend readers,” he has nevertheless decided that his own personal “understanding about what is appropriate” will simply override these barriers (p. viii). He also believes that in order to successfully convert others to his point of view he must engage in the “unavoidable” task of discussing the temple ordinances in specific detail (p. viii). I will venture to say that most Latter-day Saints will be greatly offended by *The Mysteries of Godliness*, and they will feel that the author has little or no regard for their sensibilities. My personal feeling was that David Buerger was openly

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5 Other reviewers of Buerger’s book have noted that even though it contains valuable primary source material, it falls far short of its proclaimed intentions. They also warn that “those who desire to understand the spiritual aspects of temple worship and the impact of temple ceremonies on individual Latter-day Saints” will find this book disappointing. Danel W. Bachman and Kenneth W. Godfrey, review of *The Mysteries of Godliness*, by Buerger, *BYU Studies* 36/2 (1996–97): 249.
challenging and degrading the most sacred part of my religion. Other people with whom I have spoken about this book have expressed similar feelings. I wondered why Buerger would profess a desire to be nonoffensive to his audience and then produce a text that was certain to do just the opposite. I decided to learn more about the author and his book in a search for understanding.

Buerger became disaffected from the LDS Church many years ago and subsequently sold his personal library to a Salt Lake City bookstore. Buerger also donated a large collection of research materials to the Special Collections library at the University of Utah in 1983, 1986, and 1990. A register was produced for the collection that includes a biography of Buerger and a brief chronology of his life up through 1992. The following information is digested from those sources so that readers of this review will be better able to understand the man and the message behind *The Mysteries of Godliness*.6

David John Buerger became involved in southern California’s counterculture and antiestablishment movements as a teenager. During this period in his life he investigated many religions, including some of a non-Christian nature. Buerger was converted to the LDS Church by the time he was eighteen. He “was most strongly drawn to study of the mysteries—speculating, for example, on the possible whereabouts of the lost ten tribes” (p. 5).7 He was called to serve as a full-time missionary the next year. Before he entered the mission field he became aware of the Adam-God theory and other teachings that he believed were mysteries. Speculation on these subjects became an essential part of his personal search for spiritual identity. In fact, he came to view “doctrinal speculation as an essential component of his own spiritual quest, a philosophy which was to color his attitude toward church authorities when he began writing for publication” (p. 6).

After Buerger was released as a missionary, his “interest in controversial subjects... brought him into contact with various

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6 See Karen Carver, “The David J. Buerger Papers: A Register of the Collection,” Manuscript Collection (MS 622), Manuscripts Division, Special Collections, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah, 1994, 10 pages.
7 Page numbers in this section refer to Carver’s biography and chronology in “The David J. Buerger Papers.”
LDS dissidents and with scholars whose ideas ran counter to the official doctrine promulgated by the church hierarchy” (p. 6). Before enrolling as a student at Brigham Young University, he expanded this circle of acquaintances. Buerger admitted that he had a “rebellious nature” and that while at BYU “he wrote extensively on various aspects of what he saw as Mormon authoritarianism” (p. 6). He was eventually called in to meet with his stake president about a paper he had written on Wilford Woodruff’s polygamy manifesto. At this meeting he was asked to clarify his testimony of the church and was also investigated for “possible affiliation with polygamous splinter groups” (pp. 6–7). After this meeting Buerger published a paper that was critical of what he viewed to be the low quality of Brigham Young University’s scholarship, which he blamed on the church’s conservative leaders (p. 7). “By the time Buerger graduated [from BYU], he was convinced that the church hierarchy was hostile to individual doctrinal study.” He moved away from Utah and was instrumental in starting a private study group called the Bay Area Colloquium (p. 7).

Another article that Buerger was preparing for publication apparently caught the attention of the First Presidency of the LDS Church, and he was asked once again to explain his personal religious views to ecclesiastical authorities (p. 7). After this incident, Buerger’s ties to the church “became increasingly tenuous. When he presented his paper on the temple endowment ceremony at the August 1986 Sunstone Symposium, he had to borrow a temple recommend from a friend to, as he put it, ‘make me look like a card-carrying member.’ Research became increasingly difficult [for him] when he was officially banned from entering the LDS Church Archives and Library in the summer of 1986” (p. 8). By 1987, the year that his article on the temple endowment was published in Dialogue, Buerger was losing his interest in Mormon history (p. 8). In 1992 he contacted LDS authorities and requested that his name be officially removed from the records of the church (p. 10).8

8 The dust jacket of Buerger’s book indicates he has published several articles on LDS topics but no mention is made of the fact that he left the LDS Church two years before The Mysteries of Godliness went to press. The remarks on the dust jacket claim that this book is a “scholarly examination of the derivation and development of the temple endowment.” Art deHoyos, a Freemason who
This information not only provides insights, but also raises two serious questions. First, is Buerger solely responsible for the book’s content? I was informed by the bookstore owner who bought Buerger’s personal library that sometime after Buerger had become disaffected from the church, he gave material from two of his Dialogue articles to Signature Books and granted permission for that material to be used in any manner the publisher saw fit. An editor then meshed this material together into book form and added information to the text that was not provided by Buerger. If this is true, who is really responsible for the message behind this book—Buerger, the editor, or a publication committee? Second, Why would any publisher closely associated with the Mormon community want to distribute a book with a message that is blatantly hostile to the restorative foundation of the LDS Church? Considering that The Mysteries of Godliness is now marketed by some of the most prolific anti-Mormons of all time, I really have to ask myself what category it should be

penned one of the two endorsements on the dust jacket, is sure that the temple endowment derived from “the adoption and transformation of Masonic ritual.” Michael Homer, who wrote the other endorsement, believes that the comparisons Buerger makes between Freemasonry and LDS temple rites will provide readers with a basis for “evaluating traditional exegesis associated with the subject” (emphasis added). A year after Buerger’s book was published Homer tried to distance himself from his own endorsement, arguing that he did not agree with Buerger’s method of comparing the rituals of Mormonism and Freemasonry. Michael W. Homer, letter to the editor, Dialogue 28/4 (1995): vi–vii. This is rather odd, given the fact that Homer himself insists that Joseph Smith’s “starting point was the rituals of Freemasonry” and claims that the Prophet “adopted and adapted some of its ‘superficial’ elements.” Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 106; see also pp. 108 and 111.

I have not confirmed the story about the editor’s unacknowledged contributions to this book, but I have noticed something about the third chapter that may be an indication of ghostwriting. This chapter is very badly edited, with over thirty mistakes in capitalization. The mistakes are of a very specific nature and they are not repeated in any other chapter of the book.


Buerger’s book has recently been offered for sale by Jerald and Sandra Tanner, both in their newsletter and on their website. I take this to mean that
Reverence for the Sacred

Buerger’s book is aimed specifically at an LDS audience, but it reads like an anti-Mormon exposé that attempts to directly undermine the restorative message of the church and labels Joseph Smith a plagiarist and a fraud.12 This is not reverence for the sacred.13 Buerger’s “reverence” for the temple is also rather puzzling. In his book he claims that the endowment takes too long and should therefore be “batch processed” so that time spent in the temple would be more of “a worshipful experience” (pp. 179–80). Perhaps this attitude explains why he deliberately chose to forego any significant treatment in his book of the “theological significance, spiritual meanings, or symbolic dimensions of the endowment” (p. vii).

Buerger’s lack of understanding about the temple manifests itself in other ways. At one point he admits that he had to ask Michael Quinn and Anthony Hutchinson to explain the Mormon concept of salvation to him (p. 2). An appeal to these two writers did not seem to help the situation, however. Buerger claims at one point in his book that those who receive the highest blessings of the temple are “not eligible for the graded degrees of judgment outlined in Doctrine and Covenants 76: they [will] be either gods or devils” (p. 124). Buerger has apparently not read Doctrine and Covenants 76:50–70; 131:1–4; 132:15–24. These passages clearly indicate that those who are exalted to the status of “gods” will reside in the highest glory of the celestial kingdom. The sons of perdition, or “devils” as Buerger calls them, are also discussed at some length in Doctrine and Covenants 76:28–38. Buerger also finds repugnant the doctrine of making one’s calling and election

they approve of its content. Perhaps the Tanners are simply returning a favor since Buerger directs his readers to eight of their publications, many of which deal with the Freemasonry issue (pp. 141, 224–27).

12 Buerger also implies that Joseph Smith disregarded his own warnings against papism and priestcraft (p. 124 n. 72).

sure because in his mind it is an “unconditional” promise of exaltation in the hereafter despite the subsequent sins that one may commit on the earth. He therefore demands that Latter-day Saints reject this doctrine (pp. 123–24, 180). Would he also insist that the apostle Peter do the same (see 2 Peter 1:10)? It is clear from his comments that Buerger does not really understand this vitally important teaching. Reed Durham admitted that his misconceptions about the temple came from a lack of learning. It seems that David Buerger employed the wrong teachers.

**Scholarly Objectivity**

The dictionary indicates that in order for someone to be objective, he or she must be neutral, “unbiased,” and “not influenced by personal feelings.” This is certainly a desirable characteristic for any serious scholar, especially when dealing with a disputable topic. At the end of The Mysteries of Godliness, however, the reader is presented with a lengthy list of negative feelings about temple worship that have been expressed by several unnamed individuals. It is the view of some, contends Buerger, that the temple ordinances are nonessential, irrelevant, old-fashioned, unimportant, disappointing, unusual, inconsistent, dull, boring, irrational, repetitious, uncomfortable, immature, guilt-inducing, too mechanical, degrading to women, excessively long, akin to being programmed, incongruent with important elements of religious life, and contrary to certain aspects of New Testament Christianity (pp. 178, 180). Buerger does not tell his readers whether or not he agrees with these strongly biased feelings, but one suspects that he does because he actively lobbies in his book to change the temple ceremony and the way that temple matters are administered (pp. 177, 180).

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14 For a discussion on the doctrine of making one’s calling and election sure, including its conditional nature, see Bruce R. McConkie, Doctrinal New Testament Commentary (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1973), 3:323–53.
15 Buerger acknowledges several individuals who contributed in one way or another to the creation of his book, including D. Michael Quinn (p. 2), Anthony A. Hutchinson (p. 2), Edward H. Ashment (p. 43), and Art deHoyos (pp. 44–46, 56, 203).
Buerger’s desire to alter temple worship to align it with his own preferences apparently springs from his personal perception that time is wasted in the house of the Lord. He reports that instead of experiencing the full temple endowment ceremony, he would much rather spend his time being instructed “in theological matters” (p. 180). Ironically, Buerger has failed to realize that the purpose of the endowment ceremony is to do that very thing.

Buerger makes one other comment that causes me to question his objectivity. He pretends to speak on behalf of the general membership of the church by claiming that “new converts,” “maturing youth,” and “today’s Saints are no longer comfortable with symbolism of any sort”; hence they do not find the temple ceremonies appealing (p. 177). No substantiation is offered for this dubious claim. Buerger never openly admits that he himself is uncomfortable with the symbolism of the endowment ceremony, yet the inclusion of today’s Saints in his statement makes me wonder how anyone with a strong bias against symbolism could possibly be objective about something as symbolic as temple ceremonies.

Adequate Documentation

Because the majority of Buerger’s book consists of quotations linked by minimal commentary, one would expect to find few, if any, problems with documentation. However, chapter 3, entitled “Joseph Smith’s Ritual,” includes a number of documentary problems, among them possible plagiarism, fabrication, misleading statements, perpetuation of myths, outdated information, and unsubstantiated claims.

Possible Plagiarism

Page 76 of The Mysteries of Godliness features an artist’s reconstruction of a possible arrangement of the endowment rooms on the Nauvoo Temple’s top floor. This drawing appeared earlier in An Intimate Chronicle: The Diaries of William Clayton, also published by Signature Books. Both, however, are nearly identical to a picture that first appeared in a copyrighted BYU Studies
article. Lisle Brown created, signed and dated the original drawing. Both Signature Books and Smith Research Associates, producer of the William Clayton diaries, fail to credit Lisle Brown as the originator of the design. In fact, they neglect to list any artist for their respective versions of this drawing. This may constitute plagiarism or even a violation of copyright law. In any case, adequate documentation is lacking.

Fabrication

The caption under the fifth picture in the illustrations section of *The Mysteries of Godliness* is problematic. The picture shows an architectural drawing by William Weeks of the Nauvoo Temple’s weather vane and depicts a horizontal angel, holding a trumpet in one hand and an open book in the other. A The angel is wearing a round cap and a long, flowing robe. According to the caption, the angel is also wearing slippers. This is simply not true. I have seen the original drawing in the LDS Church Archives, and the angel is plainly barefoot. If one looks closely enough at the picture in Buerger’s book, one can see the angel’s toenails. This example of “seeing things” should alert readers to the possibility that the author, or others who may have contributed to this book, might be seeing other things as well.

Misleading Statements

Appendix 2 is labeled “Published Descriptions of the Temple Ceremony” (p. 203), a misleading title. First, several items listed in this appendix have not been published. Second, Buerger has

18 I also must take exception with the date assigned to this drawing by the caption writer—“ca. 1846.” The writing above the angel says “for Temple,” indicating that the sketch was made prior to the construction of the weather vane itself. Perrigrine Sessions indicated in his diary that the weather vane was attached to the Nauvoo Temple spire on 3 February 1845: “In the morning and evening of this day there was a flame of fire seen by many to rest down upon the Temple. On this day they raised the vane which is the representation of an angel in his priestly robes with the Book of Mormon in one hand and a trumpet in the other which is overlaid with gold leaf.” Perrigrine Sessions, *The Diaries of Perrigrine Sessions*, vol. B (Bountiful, Utah: Carr, 1967), 43–44.
omitted pro-Mormon sources. No mention is made of the works of John A. Widtsoe, James E. Talmage, or Boyd K. Packer. Instead, Buerger has pointed his readers almost exclusively to anti-Mormon exposés by such individuals as John C. Bennett, Fanny Stenhouse, Ann Eliza Webb, Fawn M. Brodie, Thelma Geer, Bill Schnoebelen, Jerald and Sandra Tanner, and Ed Decker. But then who could doubt the veracity of such classic statements as:

_The Gates of the Mormon hell opened, exhibiting the licentious abominations and revellings of the high priest of the Latter-day Saints Rev. Brigham Young and his 90 wives; and the vile scenes enacted by the elders and apostles with their many spiritual concubines in the secret chambers of the harem, or institution of cloistered Saints, privately attached to the temple._ (p. 214)

Buerger refers to Orson F. Whitney’s _History of Utah_ as one of the sources containing “Published Descriptions of the Temple Ceremony.” Whitney’s book contains no such thing and does not serve the purpose of Buerger’s appendix. He tries to justify its inclusion by noting that on one single page “Whitney refers to the _Salt Lake Tribune_ [temple] exposés and complains that sacred LDS rituals were ‘revealed by apostates’” (p. 218). Buerger apparently missed the irony of including this statement in his book. It would be interesting to see how Elder Whitney would characterize Buerger if he learned that Buerger listed him with outspoken apostates intent on discrediting sacred temple ordinances.

Another misleading statement can be seen on pages 48 and 49, where Buerger asserts that

the _History of the Church_ records [Joseph] Smith in 1835 using Masonic terms to condemn the “abominations” of Protestants and praying that his “well fitted” comments “may be like a nail in a sure place, driven by the master of assemblies.” Smith’s familiarity with and positive use of Masonic imagery is paradoxical in light of his anti-secret society rhetoric during the Missouri period.
Buerger does not bother to direct his audience by way of a footnote to a single source that demonstrates that this is Masonic imagery or terminology. This language actually comes straight from the King James Bible. In Isaiah 22:23 the Lord says, “I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place,” and in Ecclesiastes 12:11 we read that the words of the wise are “as nails fastened by the masters of assemblies.” Buerger seems to believe that “well fitted” is a Masonic term, referring to the skillful fitting together of stones by stonemasons. Either he has misunderstood plain English or he deliberately misleads his readers in order to strengthen his argument. This quotation from the History of the Church 2:347 actually reads:

I had liberty in speaking. Some Presbyterians were present, as I afterwards learned; and I expect that some of my sayings sat like a garment that was well fitted, as I exposed their abominations in the language of the scriptures; and I pray God that it may be like a nail in a sure place, driven by the master of assemblies.

Perhaps the most misleading statement in Buerger’s book is found on page 58. Without any commentary or explanation Buerger says: “The LDS First Presidency went so far in 1911 as to refer publicly to the ‘Masonic characters [of] the ceremonies of the temple.’” This partial quotation is clearly meant to imply that the First Presidency admitted that LDS temple ordinances were pilfered from Freemasonry. But the context of the full quotation helps to clarify what the First Presidency meant by this comment. The full quotation reads: “Because of their Masonic characters the ceremonies of the temple are sacred and not for the public.”19 The term masonic can mean simply something that is secret. This is precisely the context of the First Presidency’s quotation.20

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20 Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language, s.v. “masonic”: “suggestive of or resembling Freemasons or Freemasonry (as in display of fraternal spirit or secrecy).” Edward Tullidge also used Masonic as a descriptive word: “Mormon apostles and elders, with a becoming repugnance and Masonic reticence quite understandable to members of every Masonic order, have shrank [sic] from a public exhibition of the sacred things of their temple.”
Perpetuation of Myths

One indication that Buerger did not adequately research his book is that he perpetuates myths. For example, he sustains the myth that Brigham Young was a Freemason before he joined the church (pp. 49–50). Both sets of minutes from the Nauvoo
Masonic lodge have been publicly available since the early 1970s, and in note 42 Buerger indicates that he has read at least one of them. Somehow he missed out on the fact that Brigham Young was not initiated as a Mason until 1842.21

Buerger perpetuates another myth when he claims, without elaboration, that "some Masonic influence can be seen in the [Kirtland] temple’s architectural patterns" (p. 48). Buerger gets this idea from Reed Durham’s “Widow’s Son” lecture, but in his footnote he fails to tell readers exactly where Durham’s quotation can be found.22 None of Reed Durham’s transcribed comments are supported by any references, but they deserve to be scrutinized nevertheless. Durham made three claims: (1) the pattern of laying and dedicating cornerstones for Mormon temples and Masonic lodges is “significantly similar,” (2) the placement of presiding officers in the east and west ends of Mormon temples and Masonic lodges is “similar,” and (3) “professional architects” have determined that the “classical and Gothic elements” in the Kirtland Temple’s architecture were directly and unmistakably influenced by Freemasonry.23 My brief response to these claims is


22 Note 29 on page 48 reads: “Durham, ‘The Widow’s Son,’ 15–33. See also Laurel B. Andrew, The Early Temples of the Mormons: An Architecture of the Millennial Kingdom in the American West (Albany: SUNY Press, 1978).” Several problems are apparent here. First, this is a different reference for the Durham material than is given in note 18 of the same chapter. The reference there is “Reed C. Durham, Jr., ‘Is There No Help for the Widow’s Son? . . .’ in Mormon Miscellaneous 1 (October 1975): 11–16.” It appears that Buerger was either not very careful with the consistency of his footnotes or note 29 may have been inserted by someone other than Buerger. Second, neither reference in note 29 is specific. “15–33” refers to the page numbers in Mervin B. Hogan’s transcriptions of Reed Durham’s talk. Hogan’s version was published along with another paper by the Masonic Research Lodge of Utah on 16 September 1974. Pages 3–12 of this publication consist of a paper by Jack Adamson entitled “The Treasure of the Widow’s Son,” while pages 13–14 are introductory comments by Hogan. The page with Durham’s speculations about Masonic influence on the Kirtland Temple’s architecture should have been identified as 16. I suppose that Laurel Andrew’s entire book is so convincing on this point that no specific reference was deemed necessary.

(1) the Lord, not the Masons, revealed the ancient pattern for laying temple cornerstones to Joseph Smith (see D&C 94:6); (2) the Lord, not the Masons, showed the entire First Presidency by vision how to arrange the interior of the Kirtland Temple, including the order of the pulpits at each end; and (3) Freemasons had absolutely nothing to do with the creation of the "classical and Gothic" patterns that were employed throughout the Kirtland Temple. It is clear that the early Saints copied these particular patterns straight from the popular architectural manuals of their day.

Outdated Information

Readers should remember that Buerger’s “book” is really just a conglomeration of articles that were published long ago. Buerger noted in his 1987 Dialogue article on the temple endowment that he did the research for that project back in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Surprisingly, this same note appeared in The Mysteries of Godliness in 1994 (p. 3). Why should this matter? Because, at the writing of this review, some of the perspectives and conclusions in Buerger’s “book” are close to twenty years

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24 Perhaps in his eagerness to find a parallel, Dr. Durham overlooked the fact that the three main officers in Masonic lodges are stationed in the east, west, and south. No such parallel can be seen inside the Kirtland Temple where twenty-four men sat: twelve in the east and twelve in the west, above and behind each other in four tiers. For the general layout of a nineteenth-century Masonic lodge see the illustration and text in Jabez Richardson, Richardson’s Monitor of Freemasonry (Harwood Heights, Ill.: Powner, 1994), 5–6. One Masonic historian believes that the early Freemasons may have borrowed the idea of seating their officers on platforms from the Christian practice of elevating church altars; see Alex Horne, Sources of Masonic Symbolism (Fulton, Missouri: Ovid Bell Press, 1981), 68. This is a possibility, since the two men who are commonly credited with the creation of Masonic ritual were Christian ministers.

old. I decided to check the age of the footnote material found in chapter 3 because it is the linchpin chapter of the book. I discovered that out of approximately one hundred footnote items in this chapter, twenty were written in the 1980s and only six were written in the 1990s. Of those from the 1990s, one is a modern publication of an 1899 quotation that directly refutes Buerger’s thesis; one is a quotation from a self-published Masonic commentator who insists that any “informed, objective analyst” must admit to a Mormon/Masonic ritual connection; two are dated after he left the church and may have been inserted by someone other than Buerger; two are modern publications of quotations from the 1840s, and one is a citation within a footnote that has no commentary attached to it at all.

It should also be noted that, in his chapter on “Joseph Smith’s Ritual,” Buerger has confined all mention of mainstream Mormon books and articles that support the ancient background of Latter-day Saint temple rites to note 15. Even with this concession, he has only listed materials that were published between 1965 and 1979. Buerger never deals directly with the content of these writings, but instead brushes them aside with the “insight” from Ed Ashment that their content is “at odds with the theological structure of the Mormon temple” (p. 43). One of the items so casually brushed aside was Hugh Nibley’s response to Ed Ashment in his article entitled “The Facsimiles of the Book of Abraham” (p. 42).26

Unsubstantiated Claims

Buerger makes several unsubstantiated claims in his book to support the theory that Joseph Smith plagiarized Masonic rites. As this is only a book review, I will not attempt to give these claims the full scrutiny they deserve. I hope that the information presented below will be helpful nevertheless.

- The origin of Freemasonry is known. For hundreds of years Freemasons have been taught during their initiation ceremonies that their rites originated at the time of King Solomon’s Temple. It has been determined in modern times that this is just a myth

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“without any historical authority.” Critics of the LDS Church have tried to turn this myth into a weapon against the authenticity of its temple rites. Buerger, for example, says that while “Latter-day Saints may feel that Masonry constitutes a biblical-times source of uncorrupted knowledge from which the temple ceremony could be drawn” by Joseph Smith, “enlightened” people know that Freemasonry was actually “a development of the craft guilds during the construction of the great European cathedrals during the tenth to seventeenth centuries” (p. 45). Ashment’s version of this argument is more complete, so I will include it here.

Joseph Smith himself indicated that he restored the ancient priesthood “signs, tokens, penalties, and key-words” of Solomon’s temple from corrupt, apostate Masonry, which accounts for several parallels between the two rituals. Unfortunately, the ultimate origin of masonic ritual is medieval Europe—not the ancient temple of Solomon, as Freemasonry asserts. Freemasonry is not old enough to be a corrupt, apostate endowment from which a modern, inspired restoration could be made.28

27 Horne, King Solomon’s Temple, 29–38.
28 Ashment, “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 295. An interesting attitude has manifested itself among certain writers when it comes to the origins of LDS temple rites. Buerger, for example, begins his book by noting that the LDS Church officially teaches that the temple ordinances are absolutely essential in order for anyone to achieve a fulness of salvation (p. vii). However, he disregards this teaching and focuses on trying to convince his readers that the endowment is not really divine, but has an earthly origin (pp. 35–68). He then ends his book by calling for his audience to reject its “mysterious transcendence” (p. 180). The Toscanos have used a slightly different approach by trying to convince the LDS community that the validity of the temple endowment is “unrelated to its historical origins.” “It doesn’t matter,” they claim, if Joseph Smith pilfered Masonic rites because the “historical origins of the endowment are irrelevant to its ritual importance.” Toscano and Toscano, Strangers in Paradox, 279. Michael Homer agrees with this view. “Ultimately,” he believes, “the efficacy of the Mormon temple ceremony does not depend on whether Joseph Smith adopted or adapted portions of the Masonic ritual when he instituted the endowment.” With this kind of an outlook it is little wonder that Homer has deliberately chosen not to “address the divine origin of the temple ceremony” in his writings and would like to discourage the “all-or-nothing” approach to this
Several things are wrong with these statements. First, the idea that Freemasonry originated with medieval European trade guilds has been discredited for a number of years now. The very best Masonic historians are still quite baffled about where their organization really came from and anyone who comments on Masonic origins should not ignore their informed judgment on this issue.

When, Why, and Where did Freemasonry originate? There is one answer to these questions: we do not know, despite all the paper and ink that has been expended in examining them. Indeed, the issues have been greatly clouded by well-meaning but ill-informed Masonic historians themselves. . . . Whether we shall ever discover the true origins of Freemasonry is open to question.

It remains difficult, even after many years of serious investigation, to determine the true origins of Freemasonry because Masonic rites and symbols were borrowed from diverse ritual systems; even after the systems were combined to form a new initiatory rite, they still went through a lengthy period of modification.

subject. Homer, ""Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,"" 3, 113. I believe that Hugh Nibley has an appropriate perspective to be offered in contrast to this line of reasoning: ""The endowment is either the real thing or it is nothing, and if it is real or if I accept the probability that it is, I cannot compromise in the least degree. . . . eternal life is an all-or-nothing proposition."" Hugh W. Nibley, ""On the Sacred and the Symbolic,"" in Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism, ed. Donald W. Parry (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994), 571.

29 Hamill, The Craft, 15, 24. John Hamill is librarian and curator of the United Grand Lodge of England. He is also a member of Quatuor Coronati Lodge No. 2076, which is considered to be the premier research organization in all Freemasonry. Hamill has outlined the myriad theories about Masonic origins in his book. Two other Masonic historians comment that an ""immense amount of ingenuity has been expended on the exploration of possible origins of Freemasonry, a good deal of which is now fairly generally admitted to have been wasted. . . . Not only has no convincing evidence yet been brought forward to prove the lineal descent of our Craft from any ancient organization . . . [but] it is excessively unlikely that there was any such parentage."" Fred L. Pick and G. Norman Knight, The Pocket History of Freemasonry, rev. ed. (London: Muller, 1977), 13.
There are really two separate issues to be considered—the origin of the Masonic organization and its ritual elements.

This brings me to the next point: Joseph Smith never claimed that he made an “inspired” restoration of the endowment keys “of Solomon’s temple from corrupt, apostate Masonry.” This statement is a fabrication, and I am not surprised that Ashment did not provide a footnote for it.30

What Joseph Smith did say, according to several early Saints, is most instructive. Heber C. Kimball, a Freemason since 1823, was present when the very first Nauvoo endowment was administered by the Prophet. A few weeks after receiving his ordinances, he wrote the following to Parley P. Pratt.

We have received some precious things through the Prophet on the Priesthood which would cause your soul to rejoice. I cannot give them to you on paper for they

30 Smith, The Journals of William Clayton, xxxvii, uses phraseology that is also misleading on this point: “Mormon leaders have identified the temple ceremony as a restoration of ancient Masonic rites.” Smith does not identify the Mormon leaders who supposedly said this but I suspect that he is alluding to statements made by Heber C. Kimball, Brigham Young, and others that refer to the temple endowment as “true Masonry” or “Celestial Masonry.” For example, Heber C. Kimball said: “We have the true Masonry. The Masonry of today is received from the apostasy which took place in the days of Solomon, and David, . . . but we have the real thing,” in Stanley B. Kimball, “Heber C. Kimball & Family, the Nauvoo Years,” BYU Studies 15/4 (1975): 458 (13 November 1858). Matthias Cowley also spoke of “Freemasonry as being a counterfeit of the true masonry of the Latter-day Saints.” Larson, A Ministry of Meetings, 380 (8 January 1902). These descriptive phrases were coined by people who took Masonic claims of Solomonic origins at face value; see, for example, Brigham Young’s statement in Journal of Discourses, 11:327–28. In their minds “Masonry” was a synonym for the true temple ordinances practiced during King Solomon’s reign. Latter-day Saints do not claim that the temple endowment is Freemasonry restored to its pristine Solomonic form, however. Joseph Smith clearly taught that the endowment is a restoration of sacred ordinances that were first practiced by Adam; see History of the Church, 2:309; 4:208; see also Facsimile 2, figure 3, in the Pearl of Great Price. The early Saints believed that even though the Masonic “institution dates its origins many centuries back, it is only a perverted Priesthood stolen from the Temples of the Most High.” H. Belnap, “A Mysterious Preacher,” Juvenile Instructor 21 (15 March 1886): 91. See also the material in n. 31, which indicates that during the Nauvoo period the temple ordinances were referred to as “the true origin of Masonry” instead of “true Masonry.”
are not to be written so you must come and get them for yourself. . . . There is a similarity of Priesthood in Masonry. Brother Joseph says Masonry was taken from Priesthood but has become degenerated. But many things are perfect.31

The only other statement that is said to have come from Joseph Smith on this subject is that of Benjamin F. Johnson, who reported:

In lighting him to bed one night he showed me his garments and explained that they were such as the Lord made for Adam from skins, and gave me such ideas pertaining to endowments as he thought proper. He told me Freemasonry, as at present, was the apostate endowments, as sectarian religion was the apostate religion.32

From both of these secondary sources we can ascertain what Joseph Smith taught concerning Freemasonry—the ordinances of the priesthood are the original pattern from which Freemasonry derived some of its ritual elements and symbolism. And that leads us to the next unsubstantiated claim.

• *Neither Mormon nor Masonic rites are biblical.* According to Buerger, certain aspects of the LDS temple ceremony "seem at odds" with New Testament Christianity (p. 178). Other writers are

31 Letter from Heber C. Kimball to Parley P. Pratt, 17 June 1842. Parley P. Pratt Papers, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah, spelling and punctuation standardized. A partial transcription of this letter can be found in Kimball, "Heber C. Kimball & Family," 458. Joseph Fielding, who received his endowment from Joseph Smith on 9 December 1843, recorded the following in his Nauvoo era journal: "Many have joined the Masonic institution. This seems to have been a stepping stone or preparation for something else, the true origin of Masonry. This I have also seen and rejoice in it. . . . I have evidence enough that Joseph is not fallen. I have seen him after giving, as I before said, the origin of Masonry." Andrew F. Ehat, "'They Might Have Known That He Was Not a Fallen Prophet'—The Nauvoo Journal of Joseph Fielding," *BYU Studies* 19/2 (1979): 145, 147, spelling and punctuation standardized. These remarks may reflect what the Prophet had personally taught Fielding about the nature of the temple ordinances.

more aggressive on this point. For instance, Gregory Prince maintains that the “Bible itself describes the rituals which bear no resemblance to either Masonic or Latter-day Saint ceremonies.”

This outlook hardly differs from that of professional anti-Mormons who claim that “there is no biblical foundation for the ceremonies which Mormons practice in their temples,” the “entire ceremony is man-made,” and it is “the product of Joseph Smith’s own fruitful imagination combined with his own personal knowledge of Masonry.” At least two anti-Mormons have gone so far as to claim that since the rituals of Freemasonry are pagan in origin and since Joseph Smith plagiarized the Masonic rituals, the LDS temple ceremonies must be considered pagan as well.

Are the Masonic ceremonies pagan? Albert Mackey, perhaps the most famous of all Masonic historians, frankly admitted that Freemasonry has “borrow[ed] its symbols from every source.” It has also been acknowledged that, over time, Masonry has adopted elements from pagan ritual systems. In the early 1700s, when Masonry was first forming, it had a distinctly Christian character. The two men credited with creating the original degrees of Masonic initiation were both Christian ministers who drew their material primarily from ancient Christian documents. The

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33 Prince, Power from on High, 148. This book is catalogued by the Library of Congress under “Mormon Church—Controversial Literature,” not just once, but three times; see Prince, Power from on High, iv.


37 In 1813 the first concerted effort was made to de-Christianize the Masonic rites; see Albert G. Mackey, History of Freemasonry (New York: Masonic History, 1898), 1:137. Around this time pagan elements began to be introduced into some of Masonry’s higher degrees, but scholar Delmar D. Darrah stresses that these additions have nothing to do with Masonic origins, in History and Evolution of Freemasonry (Chicago: Powner, 1979), 36.

38 The men responsible for creating the rites of Freemasonry and writing its first “history” were James Anderson, an ordained clergyman from the Anglican Church, and Jean Desaguliers, a Presbyterian minister from Scotland. In recent years the theory that Masonic legends and rituals came out of the Christian monasteries of England has received serious consideration; see Cyril N. Batham,
published accounts of the Masonic rites from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries demonstrate these rites to have been based firmly on the Bible. In one of these early texts, I counted about 115 elements in the three main initiation rituals alone that come straight from the Bible. It must be remembered, however, that even though the creators of Masonic ritual may have “drawn freely” from biblical texts, they also infused some of that material with “significantly new meanings.”

And what about the temple rites of the Latter-day Saints? Do they have a biblical foundation, or are they simply the fraudulent creation of Joseph Smith? After several years of examining the available evidence, I am thoroughly convinced not only that the LDS temple endowment is genuinely ancient, but also that its main elements can be clearly seen within biblical texts.

“The Origin of Freemasonry: (A New Theory),” in *Ars Qua/uor Coronarum* 106 (1993): 16-47. One commentator has presented convincing evidence that some of the dramatic elements of the Masonic rites were borrowed straight from the Christian mystery plays of the Middle Ages; see N. Barker Cryer, “Drama and Craft: The Relationship of the Mediaeval Mystery and Other Drama to the Practice of Masonry,” in *Ars Quatuor Coronarum* 87 (1974): 74-95. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:327, said that the Freemasons “were Christians originally.”

39 Richardson, *Richardson’s Monitor of Freemasonry*, 5-41.

40 Eric Ward, “In the Beginning Was the Word . . .” in *Ars Quatuor Coronarum* 83 (1970): 306. Ward admits that Freemasons “cannot in truth claim to be a continuation of medieval operative masonry” (ibid., 301). Instead, Freemasonry was an independent creation by a group of individuals who “adapted certain simple rites and customs which they gathered from documents of the operative craft of former times and to give an aura of respectable antiquity they maintained and believed they were merely continuing an unbroken line of masonic practice and philosophy. . . . [S]peculative Masons have drawn upon material from former times, from the freestone masons, the Bible and from ancient sources unconnected with either. . . . By a long process of refinement, by adding and discarding, a system has been developed” (ibid., 302).

How then should readers react to the "pattern of resemblances" listed by Buerger and others, which seemingly indicates that Joseph Smith "drew on Masonic rites in shaping the temple endowment" (p. 56)? They should turn to page 52 of *The Mysteries of Godliness*, where Buerger is more forthright about the nature of these supposed "parallels." There he says only that "the Nauvoo endowment and its contemporary Masonic ritual resemble each other so closely that they are *sometimes* identical" (emphasis added). Buerger describes these occasionally incriminating pieces of evidence as "echoes," "similarities," "resemblances," "not unlike," "possibly," and "seeming" (pp. 55–56). Even when Buerger tries to strengthen the idea of parallelism by comparing the texts of Catherine Lewis’s 1848 temple exposé and the 1826 Masonic exposé by William Morgan, he can only come up with two direct matches out of the eight items that he lists (pp. 53–55). This exercise is unimpressive.

*The chronology question.* Buerger and other critics believe that the timeline of historical events can be used to demonstrate that Joseph Smith was a plagiarist. The reasoning is simple and appears to be incriminating: Joseph Smith was initiated as a Freemason in March 1842. After witnessing the Masonic rites several times, he introduced his own temple ceremony in May 1842. Since the Prophet's temple ceremony contains parallels to Freemasonic rites, he must be guilty of plagiarism (pp. 51–52). Michael Homer bolsters this argument by claiming that "there is no direct evidence that the prophet discussed or revealed the endowment to anyone before the Holy Order was initiated on May 4, 1842." In his view, the "notion that Smith was familiar with the complete endowment before he was initiated into Freemasonry is premised on faith, not facts." It is also his opinion that "the evidence upon which some Mormon writers have concluded that Smith’s knowledge of the endowment preceded his association with Freemasonry is circumstantial and inconclusive."42

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42 Homer, "Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry," 99–100. It is important to remember that the "Mormon writers" to whom Homer refers—John A. Widnsoe, B. H. Roberts, Melvin J. Ballard, Anthony W. Ivins, and E. Cecil McGavin—did not have the same understanding of Masonic history that modern
scholars do. While Latter-day Saints should recognize the limitations these men were under and approach their writings with appropriate caution, critics of the LDS Church need not suppose that by thrashing these outdated writings to pieces they have inflicted any real damage. Gregory Prince adds a new twist to the chronological arguments when he claims that "the Nauvoo temple was designed like the Kirtland House of the Lord for the simple reason that as late as April 1842 no differences between the Kirtland and Nauvoo endowments were anticipated." But then he softens this statement and argues instead that the dramatic evolution between the Kirtland and Nauvoo ordinances was "apparently unanticipated." Prince, Power from on High, 132–33. It is fitting that he qualified his claim since the evidence he presents to sustain it, consisting of a brief summary of comments made by Hyrum Smith at the church's 6 April 1842 General Conference, is weak. Times and Seasons 3 (15 April 1842): 763. These comments say only that missionaries would be required to receive "the same anointing" that was given to the elders in Kirtland so that they too could preach the gospel with power. The detailed outline of the Nauvoo temple rites in Doctrine and Covenants 124, dated 19 January 1841, absolutely obliterates Prince's contention that no differences were anticipated for the LDS temple ceremony up through April 1842. Those who read Prince's full argument will see that an apostolic epistle dated 15 November 1841 deals a blow to his theory: "God requires of his Saints to build Him a house wherein His servants may be instructed, and endowed with power from on high, to prepare them to go forth among the nations, and proclaim the fulness of the Gospel for the last time.... In this house all the ordinances will be manifest, and many things will be shown forth, which have been hid from generation to generation." History of the Church, 4:449. A letter from Joseph Fielding, dated 28 December 1841 and printed in the Times and Seasons 3 (1 January 1842): 648–49, also indicates that the Saints anticipated receiving "the fulness of the priesthood" in the Nauvoo Temple. Ashment, in "The LDS Temple Ceremony," 291 n. 10, advances a similar argument: "It is also significant that the original drawings of the Nauvoo temple did not include an area in which to perform the endowment ceremony, suggesting that no endowment ceremony was contemplated. Later drawings of the temple were altered to include a rectangular section in the attic story at the front where the endowment was to be performed." This claim cannot be substantiated since anyone who has seen William Weeks's Nauvoo Temple drawings knows that the first two drafts of the facade show a large semicircular window in the triangular pediment of the attic story, indicating that the space was to be used for some purpose. By the third drawing the triangular pediment of the temple was replaced by a rectangular front, and five small, semicircular windows had replaced the large single one; see Jay M. Todd, "Nauvoo Temple Restoration," Improvement Era (October 1968): 15–16. If Ashment had checked one of the published drawings of the Nauvoo Temple attic, he would have seen that the rectangular area, consisting of inner and outer courts, was not used for the purpose of presenting the endowment ceremony.
In order to cover all the chronological bases, critics claim that Joseph Smith *might have* had an extensive knowledge of Masonic rituals long before he was even initiated as a Freemason. The problem with this claim is that it offers no hard evidence, only possibilities: Joseph Smith’s father and brother, who became Masons in the early 1800s, *may* have told him all about Freemasonry (p. 44); early converts who were Masons or anti-Masons *might* have provided him with detailed information (pp. 49–50); he *could* have read anti-Masonic exposes and become familiar with Masonic secrets. This theory does not offer one scrap of hard evidence that would support any of these suppositions. It is clear to me that Joseph Smith had a rudimentary understanding of Freemasonry before his initiation, otherwise he would have had no reason to join its ranks. But did he have a detailed knowledge of its secrets? The available evidence suggests that he did not. First, every Freemason swears an oath of nondisclosure, agreeing not to divulge the secrets of the society. A breach of this promise could bring about the punishment and expulsion of the violator. Besides the lack of a record of anyone’s being ejected from Masonry for prematurely revealing information to the Prophet, Franklin D. Richards said that “Joseph, the Prophet, was aware that there were some things about Masonry which had come down from the beginning and he desired to know what they were, hence

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43 Homer, “Similarity of Priesthood in Masonry,” 100. John Tvedtnes has pointed out in conversation with me that if Joseph Smith had somehow gained a detailed knowledge of Masonic rites prior to 1842 it would have been counterproductive for him to become a Freemason. He could have avoided casting suspicion on his reputation as a prophet by avoiding any Masonic affiliation and by making it appear as though the temple ceremony had simply come “out of the blue.” I would add that instead of taking this safe route the Prophet pursued the one path that was sure to bring the charge of plagiarism against him. I doubt that a deceiver would take such an obvious risk.

44 The founding minutes of the Nauvoo lodge clearly spell out this rule: “Should any member disclose to any person other than Ancient York Masons, in good standing, any of the proceedings or transactions of this lodge, improper to be made public, he shall be suspended, expelled, or otherwise dealt with, at the discretion of the lodge.” Hogan, *The Founding Minutes of Nauvoo Lodge*, 5. Heber C. Kimball, for one, said: “I have been true... to my Masonic brethren,” in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:182.
the lodge." This statement implies that the Prophet had no knowledge of Masonic secrets prior to his initiation.

Plenty of evidence, however, is available that Joseph Smith had a detailed knowledge of the Nauvoo temple ceremonies long before he introduced them in May 1842 and long before he set foot inside a Masonic hall. I have constructed a twenty-one-page timeline from historical sources that supports this conclusion. I cannot present all the evidence in this book review, but I would like to employ a small portion of it to address one of the recurring chronological fallacies put forward by Joseph Smith's detractors.

While Joseph Smith was translating the book of Abraham from Egyptian papyri, he wrote a series of short explanations for three of the illustrations that accompanied his translation. The Prophet noted that in Facsimile 2, figures 3 and 7 were related in some manner to "the grand Key-words of the Holy Priesthood" and "the sign of the Holy Ghost." When he came to figure 8, he explained that this area on the Egyptian drawing contained "writings that cannot be revealed unto the world; but is to be had in the Holy Temple of God." Buerger does not see how a literal translation of the Egyptian hieroglyphics in figure 8 can possibly have anything to do with the Nauvoo temple ceremony. He rejects the Prophet's explanations and believes that Freemasonry is a more "reasonable" source of acquisition for Smith's endowment elements (pp. 43–44).

Other writers have used the Facsimile 2 material to sharpen the chronological argument against Joseph Smith. Facsimile 2 and its temple-related explanations were first printed in the 15 March 1842 edition of the Times and Seasons, the same day that the Prophet received the first of three Masonic initiation rites. Latter-day Saints have traditionally argued that this issue of the newspaper was published during the day while the Prophet's Masonic

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45 Larson, A Ministry of Meetings, 42.
initiation did not occur until that evening. Thus Joseph Smith must have had temple knowledge before he had Masonic knowledge. But critics point out that the 15 March issue of the paper was not actually published until 19 March, several days after the Prophet witnessed the Masonic ceremonies.47

This is where terminology becomes crucial. Critics claim that the phrases employed by Joseph Smith in the Facsimile 2 explanations are Masonic and that it was not until several days after his Masonic induction that Joseph Smith “first spoke of ‘certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood.’”48 These critics assume the terms are necessarily “Masonic,” yet it must be remembered that Freemasonry’s rites are little more than borrowed baggage.49 Then what about the supposedly incriminating timing

48 Prince, Power from on High, 135. The remarks that Prince refers to were made on 20 March 1842 and are recorded in Wilford Woodruff's Journal, 2:162: “certain key words and signs belonging to the priesthood which must be observed in order to obtain the blessings” (spelling and punctuation standardized). Buerger uses the same basic argument but employs a different quotation to make his point. He claims that after the Prophet had witnessed several Masonic initiation ceremonies he preached a sermon on 1 May 1842 that carried “Masonic overtones”: “The keys are certain signs and words... which cannot be revealed... till the Temple is completed” (pp. 51–52). Ed Ashment argues that Joseph Smith either composed his Facsimile 2 explanations on the very day of his Masonic initiation or perhaps even sometime later, “resulting in the most importance of Facsimile 2.” Ashment, “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 290–91.
49 Masonic passwords came straight from the Bible. A. C. F. Jackson, “Masonic Passwords: Their Development & Use in the Early 18th Century,” Ars Quatuor Coronatorum 87 (1974): 106–7, 123, 125, 128, 130. Some of Masonry’s ritual gestures were adopted from biblical texts. Eric Ward, “In the Beginning Was the Word...” Ars Quatuor Coronatorum 83 (1970): 309; see also Colin F. W. Dyer, Symbolism in Craft Freemasonry (London: Lewis Masonic, 1983), 49. It is the opinion of some historians that Masonry’s ritual gestures were derived from a system of signs employed by medieval Christian monks. Mackey, Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry, 715. As far as the Masonic penalties are concerned, some “eminent brethren of the Fraternity insist that the penalty had its origin in the manner in which the lamb was sacrificed under the charge of the Captain of the Temple” in Jerusalem. Albert G. Mackey, An Encyclopaedia of Freemasonry, rev. ed. (Chicago: Masonic History, 1925), 2:551; see also The American Quarterly Review of Freemasonry (New York: Robert Macy, 1859), 2:269. The Masonic handclasps, embrace, and transmittal of an esoteric word can be traced back to a story about Noah that is recorded in a docu-
of these incidents? This is precisely the point at which the entire argument falls apart. On 5 May 1841 William Appleby paid a visit to Joseph Smith, who read to him the revelation on temple ordinances, now identified as Doctrine and Covenants 124, that was received 19 January 1841. After the two men discussed baptism for the dead, the Prophet got out his collection of Egyptian papyrus scrolls and, while exhibiting Facsimile 2, explained to Appleby that part of the drawing was related to “the Lord revealing the Grand key words of the Holy Priesthood, to Adam in the garden of Eden, as also to Seth, Noah, Melchizedek, Abraham, and to all whom the Priesthood was revealed.” It is also clear from Doctrine and Covenants 124 that Joseph Smith was well aware of the main ritual elements of the Nauvoo endowment ceremony at least as early as 19 January 1841. This revelation lists the components of Nauvoo temple worship:

- baptism for the dead (D&C 124:39),
- washings (D&C 124:39),
- anointings (D&C 124:39),
- the keys of the Holy Priesthood (D&C 124:34, 95, 97),

A document called the Graham Manuscript. This document is essentially Christian in character, but the original source of the material found within it remains unknown; see Horne, *King Solomon's Temple*, 336–45. All these ritual elements can be seen in Richardson, *Richardson’s Monitor of Freemasonry*, 5–41.

50 William I. Appleby Journal, 5 May 1841, MS 1401 1, LDS Church Archives, Salt Lake City, Utah. Joseph Smith’s knowledge of key words can be traced at least as far back as 9 March 1841 when he told the Nauvoo Lyceum that the “great God has a name by which he will be called which is Ahman—also in asking have reference to a personage like Adam, for God made Adam just in his own image. Now this is a key for you to know how to ask and obtain.” Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991), 64, spelling and punctuation standardized.

51 Orson Pratt provided a footnoting system for the Doctrine and Covenants that was included with the book up through 1918. In the footnotes for Doctrine and Covenants 124 he indicated that the “keys” referred to in verses 95 and 97 were “the order of God for receiving revelations” and “the order, ordained of God.” *The Doctrine and Covenants of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: The Deseret News, 1918), 441. In his Nauvoo era journal, George Laub referred to the endowment’s ritual elements as “keys whereby to approach our Heavenly Father, signs and tokens,” thus clarifying the context of Doctrine and Covenants 124:95 and 97; “George Laub’s Nauvoo Journal,” ed. Eugene England, *BYU Studies* 18/2 (1978): 164, capitalization standardized.
memorials of Levitical sacrifices (D&C 124:39),
solemn assemblies (D&C 124:39),
oracles, conversations, statutes, and judgments (D&C 124:39),
ordnances that have been kept hidden (D&C 124:40–41),\textsuperscript{52} and
the fulness of the priesthood (D&C 124:28)

Sometimes critics get so desperate to discredit Joseph Smith that they manufacture evidence in order to win their argument. In an attempt to demonstrate that the Prophet had extensive knowledge of Freemasonry at the earliest stages of the church, critics claim that the Book of Mormon contains Masonic language. In their minds the presence of such language constitutes proof that Joseph Smith not only knew Masonic terminology all along, but also that the Book of Mormon was composed by the Prophet and is not an authentic ancient document. Buerger refers his readers to several writings that support this theory, and he praises Dan Vogel’s article entitled “Mormonism’s ‘Anti-Masonic Bible’” as the “best study to date” (p. 47 n. 25). Buerger does not tell his readers that Daniel C. Peterson has published a detailed rebuttal of this theory. Peterson’s article and a follow-up piece were both

\textsuperscript{52} The specific wording used is “things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world” (D&C 124:41). Ashment and Prince interpret this phrase in ways that will support their respective arguments. Ashment takes it to mean “things that were never before known.” Ashment, “The LDS Temple Ceremony,” 291. Prince sees it in a similar manner: “A revelation dated 19 Jan. 1841 (DC, LDS, 124) speaks of ‘things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world’ (v. 41). Although this sounds similar to the statement concerning the 1842 endowment [in History of the Church, 5:2], the fact that it reaches farther back than Adam (‘before the foundation of the world’) and makes no mention of endowment suggests that it did not anticipate a newer version of the Kirtland endowment.” Prince, Power from on High, 138. Neither of these interpretations can be sustained. The History of the Church quotation referred to above makes it clear that the Nauvoo endowment was the institution of “the ancient order of things for the first time in these last days.” History of the Church, 5:2, emphasis added. An epistle by the Twelve regarding the Nauvoo Temple also clarifies the context: “In this house all the ordinances will be made manifest, and many things will be shown forth, which have been hid from generation to generation.” History of the Church, 4:449, emphasis added. The endowment ordinances were also described in a church periodical as “those things hid up from the world.” Millennial Star 4 (October 1843): 83, emphasis added.
published long before *The Mysteries of Godliness* went to press, giving Buerger ample time to include them in his book to demonstrate his professed objectivity on this issue.53

**There was no endowment revelation.** Buerger feels justified in his belief that the temple endowment was derived from Freemasonry because Joseph Smith did not “leave a direct statement of how the endowment ceremony came to be” (p. 40). “On so important and central an ordinance,” he laments, “it is unfortunate there is no revelatory document nor any known contemporary reference to a revelation either by [Joseph] Smith or his associates” (p. 41).

Why didn’t the Prophet leave behind “a direct statement” on the endowment’s origins? Buerger answers this very question in one of his articles but fails to include the answer in his book: Joseph Smith was only able to finish his official history up through 1838. Had he lived longer it is entirely possible that he would have recorded such a statement.

Is there any contemporary reference to an endowment revelation by Joseph Smith or his associates? Yes, on 19 January 1841 Joseph Smith recorded a revelation wherein the Lord not only provided him with a detailed outline of the endowment ceremonies but also promised to show the Prophet “all things” pertaining to the Nauvoo Temple “and the priesthood thereof” (D&C 124:42). Only seven days after Joseph Smith administered the first Nauvoo endowments, John C. Bennett wrote in a letter that the Prophet had established an organization called “Order” (clearly the “Holy Order”) “by inspiration.” He said that there were

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“many curious things” associated with this group. That same year Bennett published a book against the church in which he claimed that “Jo[seph Smith] pretends that God has revealed to him the real Master’s word which is . . . [part of the] ‘restoration of the ancient order of things.’” In a near-contemporary record, which is related to this statement, William Clayton said of the Prophet, “He also spoke concerning key words. The g[rand] key word was the first word Adam spoke and is a word of supplication. He found the word by the Urim and Thummim.”

Several later statements indicate that the endowment was restored through revelatory means. In 1845 Parley P. Pratt explained that Joseph Smith had given the Quorum of the Twelve “a pattern in all things pertaining to the sanctuary and the endowment therein” and cited the Prophet as saying that these things were “according to the heavenly vision, and the pattern shown me from heaven.” On another occasion Pratt asked: “Who instructed [Joseph Smith] in the mysteries of the Kingdom, and in all things pertaining to Priesthood, law, philosophy, sacred architecture, ordinances, sealings, anointings, baptisms for the dead, and in the mysteries of the first, second, and third heavens, many of which are unlawful to utter? Angels and spirits from the eternal worlds.” Elizabeth A. Whitney was convinced that an angel “committed these precious things into [the] keeping” of Joseph

55 John C. Bennett, History of the Saints (Boston: Leland & Whitney, 1842), 275–76, emphasis added. Another anti-Mormon, John H. Beadle, said that “Joseph Smith out-Masoned Solomon himself and declared that God had revealed to him a great key-word, which had been lost, and that he would lead Masonry to far higher degrees, and not long after their charter was revoked by the Grand Lodge. . . . [T]he Mormons are pleased to have the outside world connect [the temple endowment and Masonic rites] and convey the impression that [the temple endowment] is Celestial Masonry.” John H. Beadle, The Mysteries of Mormonism (Philadelphia: National Publishing, 1878), 409. Freemasons are taught in their initiation ceremonies that certain elements of their ritual have been lost “and that certain substituted secrets were adopted ‘until time or circumstance should restore the former.’” Hamill, The Craft, 15–16.
57 Millennial Star 5 (March 1845): 151, statement made 1 January 1845.
Smith. Eliza Munson likewise claimed that an angel showed Joseph Smith the pattern for the clothing that was to be worn during the endowment. Brigham Young’s son indicated that his

59 Elizabeth A. Whitney, “A Leaf from an Autobiography,” Woman’s Exponent 7 (15 December 1878): 105. The theme of angelic delivery of endowment knowledge also shows up in early non-Mormon sources. One source says that the temple “ritual, it was explained, was revealed by an angel, and the Prophet only joined the lodge to see to what extent it had degenerated from its Solomonic purity,” George B. Arbaugh, Revelation in Mormonism: Its Character & Changing Forms (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1932), 160. Another source reports: “It is stoutly maintained that the priesthood is necessary to the being, as well as the perfection of a church. . . . [W]e are informed [that the priesthood has] working signs, and that Masonry was originally of the church, and one of its favored institutions, to advance the members in their spiritual functions. It had become perverted from its designs, and was restored to its true work by Joseph [Smith], who gave again, by angelic assistance, the key-words of the several degrees that had been lost; and when he entered the lodges of Illinois, he could work right ahead of the most promoted; for which, through envy, the Nauvoo lodge was excommunicated.” John W. Gunnison, The Mormons, or Latter-day Saints, in the Valley of the Great Salt Lake (Philadelphia: Lippincott & Grambo, 1852), 57, 59–60. Richard F. Burton, like Gunnison, said that the Saints “declare that . . . masonry is, like the Christian faith, founded upon truth, and originally of the eternal church, but fallen away and far gone in error.” He likewise repeats the idea that an “angel of the Lord brought to Mr. Joseph Smith the lost key-words of several degrees.” Burton, The City of the Saints (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1862), 350–51.

60 “It was while they were living in Nauvoo that the Prophet came to my grandmother, who was a seamstress by trade, and told her that he had seen the angel Moroni with the garments on, and asked her to assist him in cutting out the garments”; cited in H. Donl Peterson, Moroni: Ancient Prophet, Modern Messenger (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1983). 165. Three historical items may lend credence to this report. First, the William Weeks architectural drawing for the Nauvoo Temple’s weather vane depicts a horizontal angel dressed in temple clothing and holding a Book of Mormon. This angel is commonly thought to represent Moroni. Second, according to a report, in 1830 the angel Moroni appeared to Oliver Granger and prophesied: “A time will come when the Saints will wear garments made without seams.” This is an obvious reference to the temple clothing of ancient Israel. Augusta J. Crocheron, Representative Women of Deseret (Salt Lake City: Graham, 1884), 24; see Exodus 28:31–32. And third, Esther Johnson, sister of Benjamin F. Johnson, related a story that is very similar to the one given above. “The Prophet called a meeting of the saints at Nauvoo and told them an angel had visited him and instructed him to have them wear the garments of the Holy Priesthood, a sample of which the angel showed him, explained all the features pertaining to it, and told him it must be worn all through life; and that it would be a protection to them against physical and spiritual
father taught "that after their arrival in Nauvoo the Lord revealed to the Prophet Joseph Smith in a meeting held in the Prophet’s brick store, the present endowment as subsequently administered in the Nauvoo Temple."\(^{61}\)

Some accounts concerning the origins of the endowment are tied directly to the subject of Freemasonry. For instance, Charles Charvatt, who knew the Prophet in Nauvoo, is reported to have said that “there were some signs and tokens with their meanings and significance which we [Freemasons] did not have. Joseph restored them and explained them to us.”\(^ {62}\) And of course, this significant statement by Franklin D. Richards provides further explanation:

Joseph, the Prophet, was aware that there were some things about Masonry which had come down from the beginning and he desired to know what they were, hence the lodge. The Masons admitted some keys of knowledge appertaining to Masonry were lost. Joseph inquired of the Lord concerning the matter and He revealed to the Prophet true Masonry, as we have it in our temples. Owing to the superior knowledge Joseph received, the Masons became jealous and cut off the Mormon lodge.\(^ {63}\)
Altogether this evidence points to the conclusion that a divine revelation that restored the temple endowment ceremonies was indeed given to Joseph Smith. It should not be too surprising that a document recording this event has not surfaced, considering that Joseph Smith instructed Heber C. Kimball that these sacred rites were “not to be written.”

**Conclusion**

*The Mysteries of Godliness* purports to be “a history of Mormon temple worship” and promises to treat its subject with reverence, show regard for the sensibilities of the faithful, provide adequate documentation, and be objective in its scholarship. In all these categories it comes up short. Readers are only provided with a partial, albeit interesting, set of historical documents with a minimal amount of commentary arranged in a manner that will support the author’s contentions. Therefore its conclusions cannot be taken as the final word on this important subject.

Faithful Latter-day Saints will likely find this book offensive because of the direct assault it makes on the doctrinal teachings of the LDS Church and on the character of its founding prophet. They will probably wonder why members of their own faith would want to promote traditional anti-Mormon points of view among them. And perhaps they will be reminded of a prophecy uttered long ago that warned of wolves entering in among the flock (see Acts 20:29–30).

Reviewed by Klaus J. Hansen

**Quinnspeak**

According to the pre-Socratic philosopher Xenophanes, if cows had a god it would be a cow. Later thinkers would expand this into the notion of the egocentric predicament: the enormous—if not insuperable—difficulty we encounter in conceiving the world in terms other than of our own experience and understanding. A recent, telling example is that of the late Sinclair Ross, distinguished Canadian novelist and writer, who, coming “out of the closet” late in life, confided to a young friend that he could never quite believe that this young man “or any other male, was quite so straight . . . [he] couldn’t be tempted by the pleasures available in a male body, or that such a body wasn’t part of every man’s fantasies. He was pretty sure it was.”¹ An even more extreme and perverse expression of this “egocentric” perspective is that of Adrienne Rich who, from her lesbian orientation, can conceive of heterosexuality only as enforced behavior for purposes of procreation²—which has elicited a positive response from some Mormon radical lesbians (pp. 120–21).³

While Michael Quinn goes to some lengths to distance himself from such extremism and egocentrism in *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example*—his

¹ Keath Fraser, “As for Me and My Secrets,” *Saturday Night* (March 1997): 77.
³ See especially Maxine Hanks, “Toward a Mormon Lesbian History: Female Bonding as Resistance to Patriarchal Colonization,” audiotape, Conference on Sexuality and Homosexuality, University of Utah, 8 August 1995.
ambitious, wide-ranging examination of same-sex dynamics among nineteenth-century Mormons—he does recognize the impossibility of complete objectivity. He acknowledges that “there is a gulf between those who have experienced erotic desire for a person of their same sex [like himself] and those who have never experienced erotic desire for a person of their same sex” (p. 7). Being in that latter category, I am of course limited by my own egocentric perspective and in my attempt to understand Michael Quinn’s effort to communicate “across that gulf of same-sex desire” as he introduces his readers to a same-sex past that for them is as alien as the customs of a foreign country. Although he disavows any intention of retrieving a “Golden Age” of social tolerance, he suggests that in his own work he is emulating the efforts of English social historian Peter Laslett to restore The World We Have Lost.4 It seems to me no accident that Quinn, who is openly “gay,” believes he has discovered in the same-sex dynamics of nineteenth-century Mormonism a world far more hospitable to and tolerant of same-sex relationships than that of modern Mormonism, which he regards as “homophobic.”

In the preface to Jackson Lear’s stimulating and brilliant study, No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, Lear observes that “all scholarship is—or ought to be—a kind of intellectual autobiography.”5 This observation strikes me as particularly accurate in reference to Michael Quinn, whose prolific scholarship in Mormon history I respect enormously, and whose books on J. Reuben Clark Jr., Mormonism and the occult, and the Mormon hierarchy I have reviewed in leading professional journals. What Lear has in mind, I think, is not a subjective, personal approach to history, but rather an intense engagement with issues of concern to the respective scholar, leading to particularly acute insights illuminated by historical imagination. To a great extent the work under review bears all these typical hallmarks of Quinn’s scholarship. At the same time, I seem to detect here a degree of subjectivity not evident in his earlier work (with the possible exception of his speculations

regarding the priesthood for Mormon women).\(^6\) I cannot but believe that *Same-Sex Dynamics* is, on one level, part of an effort to reconcile Quinn’s professed homosexuality—which he publicly announced as a consequence of the book’s publication—with his long-standing, profound commitment to Mormonism (in spite of his excommunication, for reasons other than homosexuality). To Quinn the enormous furor in orthodox Mormon circles over the present book is, in fact, merely an indication of just how far the church has moved away from its original foundation—not in its fundamental teachings, but in its “homophobic” modern incarnation. I am very much reminded of the work of the late John Boswell, who, in a number of influential works on the position of homosexuals in the early and the medieval church, adopted an analogous point of view.\(^7\)

According to Quinn, nineteenth-century American culture (Mormonism included) lacked conceptions of sexuality and sexual identity, and therefore did not single out individuals performing homosexual acts as belonging to a special category. At the same time, Quinn asserts that segregation between the sexes was common and pervasive, permitting and even encouraging a whole spectrum of same-sex relationships. These range from associations in work, recreation, school, or church; from nonerotic friendships all the way to passionate love relationships and sexual liaisons—translated into Quinn’s version of sociologese (or sexualese) as the homosocial, the homopastoral, the homotactile, the homoeotional, the homoromantic, and the homomarital (all these from the table of contents). Having thus been prepared for the very worst of jargon-ridden prose, the reader is relieved to find that the writing style on the whole is workmanlike and straightforward.

The same, however, cannot be said for the way in which Quinn constructs his arguments. To be sure, this is pioneering work in virgin territory, and the author deserves some leeway. It is, after all, amazing that a book on this subject could be written by some-

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one professing a firm testimony of the truth of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Quinn is very brave indeed. In his characteristic way, he has amassed a truly staggering and daunting amount of material. Clearly, one purpose is to overwhelm the reader into agreement. Quinn proceeds from the premise that same-sex attraction is an inherited genetic trait, like left-handedness. In the past left-handed individuals were harassed, and attempts were made to change them into right-handed people; however, society has learned to tolerate left-handedness, so why not gays and lesbians? It is virtually irrefutable logic, except that we are dealing with morals ruled by religio-social laws, not logic. But Quinn also understands that what is ultimately important is not the cause of same-sex attraction, but its social construction. It is at this juncture that the analogy breaks down, as it must if Quinn is to justify writing this book. Of course, that gets him into another difficulty. Because nineteenth-century Americans lacked conceptions of sexual identity, their behavior is not readily identifiable in sexual terms that we as modern readers can understand. We construct our world differently from the way they constructed theirs. Thus our deconstruction of their world may lead us to misconstrue it. Though Quinn professes to be sensitive to this danger, he has not always avoided it, as I shall attempt to demonstrate.

On the surface, his use of the term *same-sex dynamics* for nineteenth-century American culture rather than *homosexuality, bisexuality, gay, or lesbian* seems entirely appropriate. Yet even though he breaks the term down into numerous subcategories, it retains a certain fuzziness, allowing for intimations of homosexual and lesbian behavior that the textual record, in my opinion, does not show. I realize, of course, that by asking for historical proof I may be accused of historical denial of same-sex eroticism (e.g., Blanche Wiesen Cook: “this demand for absolute proof of same-sex genital contact equals the ‘historical denial of lesbianism’” [p. 159]).

Quinn's evidence for homoerotic behavior among nineteenth-century Mormons is like the tip of the proverbial iceberg: most of what happened below the waist happened below the waterline. Quinn documents only 76 cases (52 men, 24 women), but he speculates that there must have been at least 400 times more instances of male and 175 times more of female homoerotic
activities (out of a total Mormon population of approximately 400,000 by 1900). Given that Quinn calculates the occurrence of homoerotic behavior by taking about 10 percent of any given population, this projection is entirely reasonable (though current statistics from the Centers for Disease Control in Atlanta put the figure closer to 5 percent). On the basis of such figures, it is possible that some of Quinn’s subjects were indeed homosexual or lesbian. He has also anticipated Mormon critics, who may counter that the Saints should be held to a higher standard, with evidence of a surprisingly high degree of heterosexual transgressions. In fact, Quinn shows that by both church and state heterosexual infractions were punished more severely than “crimes against nature,” such as sodomy.

In his indefatigable scouring of religious and secular records, court and medical records, diaries, journals, and letters, Quinn has indeed amassed an impressive record of same-sex dynamics. Yet much of his evidence seems to be a kind of overkill, a sociological pigeonholing of the obvious into rather artificial categories that acquire an aura of scholarly respectability through the magic of “Quinnspeak.” “Hosomocial” encounters, for example, occurred among men in priesthood quorums, in the School of the Prophets, in the theocratic Council of Fifty, and so on, while women experienced them in the Relief Society, cultural organizations, and female-only testimony meetings. An example of a “homotactile” practice is the ordinance of the washing of the feet in the School of the Prophets (practiced to this day by the First Presidency and the Quorum of the Twelve). The anointing of the sick is both “homopastoral” and “homotactile.” Same-sex dancing in Nauvoo, on the trek west, and in Utah is an example of both “homosocial” and “homotactile” behavior. In letters and diaries both women and men express “homoemotional” and “hororomantic” feelings, so common throughout the nineteenth century. If they kiss, as they frequently did, they may also be moving into the more dangerous territory of the “homoerotic.” Summing up the meaning of this kind of behavior, Quinn quotes social historian E. Anthony Rotundo to the effect that, in a society that lacked the concept—and the language—of sexual identity, “young men (and women, too) could express their affection for each other physically without risking social censure or feelings of
guilt” (p. 94). However, an important point Quinn acknowledges but does not stress is that this sort of behavior did not go to the extremes of genital play. It appears then that the same-sex dynamic was not as open-ended and fluid as Quinn seems to imply, though he stops short of pushing his evidence beyond parameters of plausibility that are patently unconvincing. In his discussion of the idea of same-sex marriages (“homomarital” unions) among Mormons, for example, he is considerably more careful and restrained than John Boswell, whose assertion that the early Christian church performed marriage ceremonies for same-sex couples rests on a willful misreading of highly ambiguous evidence (though Quinn accepts Boswell’s interpretation) and provides no support for those who are looking for a precedent that would allow same-sex marriage ordinances between Mormons.

While Quinn is not as vulnerable to criticism as Boswell, the cumulative effect of his selective evidence and interpretations raises questions in my mind about the validity of his arguments and conclusions. This selectivity is particularly apparent in Quinn’s treatment of Joseph Smith. What, for example, are we to make of accounts such as the following: that Joseph taught that “two who were vary [sic] friends indeed should lie down upon the same bed at night locked in each other["s] embrace talking of their love & should awake in the morning together” (p. 410), and at Carthage Jail Joseph shared a bed with thirty-two-year-old Dan Jones, who “lay himself by [Joseph’s] side in a close embrace” (p. 410)? Quinn claims that it is not his intention to turn Joseph into a homosexual; readers can arrive at their own conclusions, as did one reviewer in OUT, a homosexual publication, who sees this history as placing modern “homophobic” Mormonism in an extremely ironic position. Of course, some scholars have even argued for a homosexual interpretation of the young Abraham Lincoln’s sharing a bed with his law partner. What is missing here and elsewhere is a nuanced reading of the text within a larger context. The same can be said of Joseph’s sermon regarding the destruction of Sodom: it was destroyed “for

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8 Boswell, Same-Sex Unions in Premodern Europe.
rejecting the prophets.” Quinn interprets this sermon as “a revision of the traditional sexual interpretation of Sodom’s destruction” (p. 409). The one, surely, does not exclude the other. It is unfortunate that when Parley P. Pratt gave a sexual interpretation for the fall of Sodom in 1853 he did not have Michael Quinn to tell him that he was “reversing the Mormon founder’s nonsexual interpretation” (p. 412). Another telling example of how Quinn misconstrues evidence is his account of the Prophet Joseph’s reputedly intense homoemotional and homoromantic relationship with William Taylor, a younger brother of John Taylor. In 1842, after Joseph had made a three-week visit to the Taylor home, William reported that “it is impossible for me to express my feelings in regard to this period of my life. I have never known the same joy and satisfaction in the companionship of any other person, man or woman, that I felt with him, the man who had conversed with the Almighty.” Editorializes Quinn: “That was an extraordinary statement in view of Taylor’s marriage at age twenty-two and his four subsequent plural marriages” (p. 112). What is even more extraordinary is Quinn’s obtuse if not deliberate misreading of this account. To be sure, modern psychologists have attempted to surround religious charisma with a sexual aura, a point Quinn might have used to his advantage. Yet he presents the passage “straight,” as it were. He similarly misconstrues Brigham Young’s famous remark that there was probably no man alive who cared for the company of women less than he, and does the same with the equally famous remark by George Q. Cannon that “men may never have beheld each other’s faces and yet they will love one another, and it is a love that is greater than the love of women” (p. 113). Surely such passages cry out for consideration of the context, for careful exegesis, even for the acknowledgment that multiple interpretations are possible beyond the tunnel of same-sex dynamics.

While Quinn acknowledges that “the most conscientious researchers have honest differences about the significance and meaning of the historical evidence that does exist” (p. 8), the construction of his argument requires a very specific and particular reading of the textual evidence.

Change, as Quinn understands only too well, is best accomplished under a conservative banner (Bismarck and Disraeli are
good examples in politics). If Joseph’s sexuality were ambiguous, perhaps there would be hope of license for modern gay and lesbian Mormons. Although reports concerning Joseph Smith take up relatively little space in the volume, he is clearly central to the whole argument, because of his key role in the whole Mormon enterprise. Thus the “outing” of Tabernacle Choir director Evan Stephens—in spite of the enormous public furor it generated (the University of Illinois Press was forced to withdraw a dust jacket depicting Stephens and one of his putative homosexual “boy chums”)10—is really rather insignificant compared to the far less overt but ultimately much more controversial “outing” of Joseph Smith. For if I read Quinn correctly, it is within the sexual dynamics that the Prophet Joseph Smith supposedly promoted and sanctioned that behavior such as is alleged on the part of Stephens must be understood.

Quinn is not naive, and I hardly expect that he anticipates a change in church policy regarding homosexuals and lesbians anytime soon. Perhaps he may take some encouragement from the unanticipated change in policy regarding priesthood denial to blacks not long after Lester Bush’s famous article in Dialogue,11 though this may well be an instance of the *propter hoc* fallacy.12 It seems to me, however, that any such change would be prompted less by an uncertain historical argument based heavily on speculation and inference than on doctrinal considerations that Quinn—for reasons I find puzzling—largely ignores. President James E. Faust, speaking for the First Presidency, recently made an

10 On this, see the discussion in this volume of the *Review* by George S. Mitton and Rhett S. James on pages 141–263.
12 According to David H. Fischer, *Historians’ Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1971), 166, “The fallacy of *post hoc, propter hoc* is the mistaken idea that if event B happened after event A, it happened because of event A. An example is provided by a female passenger on board the Italian liner *Andrea Doria*. On the fatal night of *Doria*’s collision with the Swedish ship *Gripsholm*, off Nantucket in 1956, the lady retired to her cabin and flicked a light switch. Suddenly there was a great crash, and grinding metal, and passengers and crew ran screaming through the passageways. The lady burst from her cabin and explained to the first person in sight that she must have set the ship’s emergency brake!”
unambiguous pronouncement regarding the church’s stand on homosexuality and lesbianism; he denounced the “false belief of inborn homosexual orientation. No scientific evidence demonstrates absolutely that this is so. Besides, if it were so, it would frustrate the whole plan of mortal happiness.” Quinn, of course, has argued that the scientific world does indeed have evidence to the contrary. He further editorializes that he fails to see how the belief that a small percentage of people have inborn homosexual traits can be a threat to the happiness of a heterosexual majority any more than a minority of left-handed individuals can be a threat to a right-handed majority. Though the logic of that argument may be compelling, it is not central to the thesis of the book. Indeed, for Quinn’s sake it is just as well that his construction of ubiquitous same-sex dynamics of nineteenth-century Mormons is not entirely persuasive. If it were, I would expect an even greater backlash and bleaker future for Mormon gays and lesbians.


Reviewed by George L. Mitton and Rhett S. James

**A Response to D. Michael Quinn’s Homosexual Distortion of Latter-day Saint History**

Love flies out the door when money comes innuendo.¹

D. Michael Quinn is a former Mormon historian now turned homosexual apologist.² His *Same-Sex Dynamics among Nineteenth-Century Americans: A Mormon Example* appears to be, among other things, another attempt to generate tolerance and perhaps even acceptance for the notion of a special homosexual identity. This highly controversial book also seems to be Quinn’s attempt to talk Latter-day Saints into ceasing to view homosexual

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² Quinn, whose Ph.D. in social history is from Yale University, taught history at Brigham Young University for twelve years. However, since 1988, he has been an “independent scholar and freelance writer” (inside back fold of dust cover). This appears to be another way of saying that Quinn has not secured a university post. See the report of an interview with Quinn by Mark Silk in which he relates that Quinn is “looking for an academic position.” *Lingua Franca* 6 (July–August 1996): 23. Contrary to some claims that have been made in connection with the promotion of his book, Quinn was never dean of graduate studies or chairman of the History Department at Brigham Young University. In the preface to the book (p. ix), Quinn calls attention to his departure from the university and also to his excommunication from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in 1993.
acts as immoral. It follows that if there is a homosexual identity, either genetically grounded or socially constructed—he seems to want to have it both ways—then apparently he thinks Latter-day Saints should cease being what he considers homophobic and make a place for homoerotic behavior within the church.

The core of Quinn's story is that in the nineteenth century, beginning even with Joseph Smith, the Saints were considerably more tolerant of sodomy than they are at present. In this essay we will focus on this aspect of Quinn's confused and confusing book, and not on the ideological staging that introduces his politically motivated and radically revisionist account of the Mormon past.

*Same-Sex Dynamics* is not Quinn's first public effort to rationalize a supposed homosexual identity. This book was preceded by an article entitled "Male-Male Intimacy among Nineteenth-century Mormons: A Case Study." We will occasionally refer to this essay in our discussion of the soundness of Quinn's book, since both "Male-Male Intimacy" and *Same-Sex Dynamics* were based on the same materials and methods. Both Quinn's essay and his book include mention of a bewildering array of same-gender behaviors, most of which have no homosexual component whatsoever, other than those present in Quinn's sly innuendoes. "Male-Male Intimacy" thus becomes "Same-Sex Dynamics" in his book. And the focus on Latter-day Saints—Quinn's "Mormons"—dominates both his essay and his book. In both publications Quinn claims that nineteenth-century Americans, including Latter-day Saints, were much more accepting of what is now tagged homosexual behavior or conduct than Saints are today. Quinn would actually have his readers believe that early Latter-day Saint leaders not only tolerated behavior that amounted to sodomy but at times also even encouraged it. He also claims that the church is unfortunately involved in a terrible "descent into homophobia," by which he does not mean dread or fear of men.

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4 The University of Illinois Press has used this currently fashionable political language in its promotional literature. See, for example, the inside fold
but disapproval of various erotic acts between those of the same sex.

Quinn claims that the current leadership of the church has moved away from the more tolerant stance of nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints. Contrary to what Quinn claims, we will show that the current leadership of the church is holding fast to moral teachings firmly rooted in scripture and that their response to the currently fashionable "gay" and lesbian political agenda, which includes, among other things, the moral justification of sodomy, is entirely consistent with the teachings of past leaders and with the scriptures. In contradiction of Quinn's claims, LDS leaders have always held that sexual acts are morally appropriate only between husband and wife. All other sexual relations, whether they are heterosexual or homosexual, have always been seen as violations of moral discipline, and hence unworthy of Saints.

Judging Quinn by His Own Standards

We will not address in any detail Quinn's attempt to morally justify homosexual acts by perpetuating the currently fashionable political mythology of a special homosexual identity. However, readers of his book should be aware of Quinn's trendy new political agenda. Our focus will be on Quinn as historian and not Quinn in one of his other roles, though these cannot, of course, ultimately be separated. We will direct our attention to Quinn's treatment of the beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saints and to those parts of the book that will most concern them. As applied to the Saints and to the leadership of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we find Quinn's arguments to be equivocal, conceptually confused, often baseless, and ultimately absurd.

In his role as apologist for homosexual conduct, Quinn has become a mythmaker. In scrutinizing this mythology, we will of the dust cover for Same-Sex Dynamics. To see exactly where Quinn's treatment of "same-sex dynamics" is headed, the reader should consult Quinn's final chapter, which is entitled "From Relative Tolerance to Homophobia in Twentieth-Century Mormonism" (pp. 366–400). And on the inside back fold of the dust cover we find Quinn's editors asserting that Quinn demonstrates that "they"—Latter-day Saints generally and LDS leaders in particular—"were remarkably tolerant of homoeroticism until the mid-1950s." This most questionable opinion is exactly the main point of Quinn's book.
employ his own standards of what constitutes fraudulent and dishonest history. He insists that those he denigrates as "traditional Mormon historians" are involved in fraud and are dishonest precisely because he thinks they suppress or manipulate textual evidence. He insists that writers are certainly "dishonest or bad historians" if they fail to acknowledge the existence of even one piece of evidence they know challenges or contradicts the rest of their evidence. If this omission of relevant evidence is inadvertent, the author is careless. If the omission is an intentional effort to conceal or avoid presenting the reader with evidence that contradicts the preferred view of the writer, that is fraud, whether by a scholar or non-scholar, historian or other specialist. If authors write in scholarly style, they are equally dishonest if they fail to acknowledge any significant work whose interpretations differ from their own.\(^5\)

We will demonstrate in detail that Quinn, from his own perspective, has been dishonest in advancing his homosexual agenda; what he has produced, instead of being competent, honest history, is an instance of fraud.

In the account of well-known nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, Quinn has offered his readers quotations that are sometimes obviously wrenched out of context and paraphrases that often distort the meaning of crucial texts. In addition his summaries and conclusions go far beyond a reasonable reading of the textual evidence. To put it bluntly, he cheats. We will demonstrate that he suppresses or ignores abundant contrary evidence. Through the use of insinuation and innuendo he strives to give a false impression of the actions and teachings of respected Latter-day Saints of the past. Rather than focus on the jargon-ridden, ideological staging for his attack on the current leadership of the church—signs of which appear here and there in his book, particularly in his final chapter (pp. 366–403) and also in his rather

bizarre "Chronology of Same-Sex Issues in American and Mormon Culture" (pp. 405-43)—we will concentrate our attention on the way Quinn selects and then distorts what he considers evidence; hence we will call into question both his competence as a historian and his honesty. We will judge Quinn by standards that he has set forth and on which he insists. In so doing we employ his own emotionally charged vocabulary.

**Quinn's So-Called Neutrality and Functional Objectivity**

Quinn has made a fetish of his supposed "functional objectivity," faulting others for their alleged lack of it. But some of his primary sources are more forthcoming about themselves—they do not pretend to be neutral or objective—than he is about himself. Many of Quinn's guesses about alleged incidents of Latter-day Saint homosexuality appear to have been borrowed from a 1994 essay by Rocky O'Donovan. Quinn refers to O'Donovan as a "self-proclaimed 'Gay' radical" (p. 395 n. 72) and claims that his "contributions to gay and lesbian Utah history cannot be overstated" (p. 80 n. 19). Quinn cites O'Donovan frequently (see pp. 69, 77 n. 17, 129 n. 62, 194 n. 111, 242, 243, 260 n. 89, 328, 385 n. 15, 386 n. 18, 389 n. 28, and 391 n. 44).

O'Donovan claims that he was "academically trained as a historian," but he also reports, "that is not a role with which I am...

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6 Quinn, "Editor's Introduction," in The New Mormon History, vii–xx. Unfortunately for Quinn, his discussion of objectivity shows little understanding of the function of such language, or of the history of the debate over either its possibility or desirability. For a knowledgeable treatment of the mythology of objectivity, see Peter Novick, That Noble Dream: The "Objectivity Question" and the American Historical Profession (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988). Quinn cites this book (see his "Editor's Introduction," ix n. 10), but he seems not to have understood Novick's arguments and their application to his own ideology. Just as Novick has shown, Quinn follows a number of less-than-perceptive historians who have claimed neutrality, detachment, or objectivity in an effort to warrant their own accounts of the past and to denigrate the efforts of others, whose work is described as partisan or politically motivated.

comfortable. . . . I consider myself a social activist, theorist, and poet.” O’Donovan also grants that it is “important that readers know of my agenda, since I do not subscribe to the theory of academic objectivity.” Quinn has not been forthcoming about his social or political agenda. Though certainly no poet, Quinn has also assumed the role of social activist, while all the time claiming to be entirely neutral and “functionally objective,” whatever that means. We are not alone in finding basic flaws and lack of objectivity in Same-Sex Dynamics. For example, one of Quinn’s reviewers notes that “there are places where Quinn’s reading of nineteenth-century notions adopted by the Mormons is driven by his desire to make the theory fit the case.” Another reviewer concluded that “as a disciplined and objective historical study of lesbians, gays, sexual issues, and Mormon culture, [Quinn’s] volume has serious drawbacks.”

Quinn’s political agenda includes a possible follow-up book dealing with homosexual behavior among former Latter-day Saints. Advertising in “gay” magazines, Quinn asks former Mormons, gentiles, and even current Latter-day Saints to send for a survey that would take four hours to complete, in which they are to relate their sexual experiences to facilitate Quinn’s comparison of the “family, religious, social, and sexual experiences of 2000 living Mormons and non-Mormons.” Out of this sex survey, which is 271 pages long and includes 1,245 questions, Quinn is planning to fashion “the sequel to the 1996 book Same-Sex Dynamics.”

Quinn sends his scurrilous sex survey out with a cover letter inviting homosexual recipients to encourage their “gay,” lesbian, and bisexual friends to request copies. Whatever else it might be, this instrument is not social science, since the participants are self-selected, rather than at random. Social scientists typically describe such self-selection as “snowballing.” But Quinn seems to imagine that he is suddenly capable of doing genuine survey research. For

8 Ibid., 123.
10 Peter Boag, New Mexico Historical Review 72/3 (July 1997): 265.
virtually all purposes his unscientific approach will invalidate whatever results he may attain.

Problems of Style and Terminology

*Same-Sex Dynamics* offers a babel in which traditional language is replaced by a new terminology heavily laced with homosexual implications. Those who have adopted this kind of terminology have done so in an effort to advance a social and political agenda hostile to values shared by the Judeo-Christian tradition, as well as by Islam. While we recognize the common and ongoing change always occurring in any language, and the right of groups to use language to meet their needs through the formation of a new or specialized vocabulary, it is important when communicating with others to use language that will be clearly understood. Quinn creates his own special vocabulary to deal with non-erotic gender matters, and also both overtly homosexual and heterosexual conduct. The result is terminological confusion. Often throughout *Same-Sex Dynamics* one can never be sure when Quinn intends a non-erotic, heterosexual, or homosexual interpretation of conduct.\(^\text{12}\) The resulting confusion was reflected by the public in Utah’s Cache and Weber Valleys when Quinn’s book was first publicized by Salt Lake City Associated Press reporter Vern Anderson.\(^\text{13}\) Between 7 March and 4 August 1996, for example, Cache Valley citizens protested and disputed Quinn’s historical method and claims. A preliminary survey of Logan, Utah’s *Herald Journal* respondents showed them to be holders of doctoral, master’s, and bachelor’s degrees. Yet Quinn claimed that he had been misunderstood.\(^\text{14}\) At best, Quinn’s jargon fails to communicate his ideas clearly. In addition, he writes with a gossipy tone, filling his text with innuendo and insinuation.

\(^{12}\) Klaus Hansen has labeled Quinn’s terminology “Quinnspeak”; see his accompanying review of *Same-Sex Dynamics* on pages 132-40.


\(^{14}\) See, for example, the following 1996 letters to the editor printed in the *Logan (Utah) Herald Journal*: Karen Berg Roylance, 7 March; Rhett S. James, 10 March; Betty Hammond, 12 March, 12 April, 4 August; Richard Gordon, 13 March; Alfred Pace, 17 March; Glen Roylance, 17 March; D. Michael Quinn, 24 March, 25 April; and Tom Cherrington, 7 April 1996.
Beyond the murky jargon, we find numerous factual errors, many of which we will examine in detail.

For example, when Quinn refers to same-sex dynamics is he merely describing same-gender relationships, or is he identifying erotic behavior? His terminology is often nebulous and ambiguous. "Same-sex dynamics" is as ambiguous as "male-male intimacy," which Quinn used in the title of his essay in Dialogue. "Same-sex dynamics" may refer to any relationship between father and son, mother and daughter, brothers, sisters, Boy Scouts, priesthood bearers, Relief Society sisters, missionaries, and so forth. A more appropriate term for the way Latter-day Saints describe these relationships might be same-gender rather than same-sex. Same-gender implies a full spectrum of human relationships and not just "sexual" ones. Quinn's jargon often is employed in ways that suggest or hint at "homoeroticism." Almost any relationship between those of the same gender may, in "Quinn-speak," take on a sexual or erotic significance, as if there were no other aspects to life. Quinn would have fared better had he used the Greek references to love: godly love (agape), brotherly love (philia), and erotic love (eros). Homosexuality, for all the gravity of the issues it raises, is treated in a matter-of-fact style, in which serious things are made to seem commonplace. Quinn thus strives to color the Mormon past with erotic and sexual significance.15

Quinn alleges that "rather than focusing on the erotic, [his] study emphasizes the full range of same-sex dynamics among Mormons born in the nineteenth century" (p. 2). But he immediately turns his attention to erotic behavior. He employs "a slew of

15 Quinn also seems to adhere to the now questionable statistic that ten percent of the population is "homosexual" (p. 4). This notion is based on the flawed study by Kinsey in 1948. Homosexual apologists have adopted that figure, which makes it appear that a fixed and significant percentage of the body politic was involved in homosexual behaviors, in an effort to advance their own political and social agenda. A more recent, government-sponsored study puts the actual number closer to one percent. See Charles W. Socarides, *Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far* (Phoenix: Margrave Books, 1995), 64–67. For a discussion of and reaction to the survey of the Battelle Human Affairs Research Centers, see Priscilla Paino, "The Shrinking Ten Percent: A New National Survey Claiming That Only 1% of Men Are Gay Has Put the Movement Off Stride," *Time* (26 April 1993): 27–29.
post-modern categories," many of which he has apparently coined. Quinn’s jargon does not appear to have precision as its purpose. Instead, his terminology invites ambiguity. He writes history with terms such as homoaffectationalism, homocultural, homoeotional, homoenvironmental, homoerotic, homomarital, homopastoral, homophobia, homoromantic, homosocial, and homotactile. In effect, Quinn “homos” the traditional dictionary. Quinn’s sexual language is Janus-faced and distorts the meaning and intent of many of the historical documents he cites. He often uses these terms in a way to suggest the “homoerotic,” but he is merely suggestive and hence can back off when challenged. He thus is prepared to claim that he did not actually mean what he appeared to suggest.

The reader must not assume that Quinn’s notes support his claims. “The footnotes often outweigh the text,” and “there is a great deal of scholarly overkill,” observes one reviewer. We would go beyond this observation. Many of Quinn’s notes are undependable; and many are merely bibliographies that a reader might consult, but which do not support Quinn’s argument. Much of what Quinn cites is simply not germane to the discussion. The volume of Quinn’s notes gives the appearance of scholarly depth, but they are often bloated, filled with mere fluff and misrepresentation. Quinn supplies a large bibliography on sexuality in America, which appears early in his notes. How these essays relate to Quinn’s argument is not obvious. We are skeptical of his bibliographical notes. We think it imperative for the reader to check Quinn’s notes carefully on any given point and not rely on Quinn’s representation of a document’s contents or meaning.

**Misrepresenting the Teachings of Early Latter-day Saint Leaders**

Quinn creates false impressions in his treatment of prominent Mormon leaders. We will discuss his treatment of the Prophet Joseph Smith, his successor Brigham Young, and George Q. Cannon—a prominent nineteenth-century apostle and longtime

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17 Ibid.
member of the First Presidency. Quinn attempts to imply that they encouraged homosexual conduct. This he does by taking their words or actions out of context and by using innuendo and speculative ambiguities. Quinn’s “evidence” in regard to these leaders is meager, inadequate, and often inaccurate. He often is forced into strained interpretations. He seems to have combed the written record for indications of anything that might be used to show that Latter-day Saint leaders favored or approved of sodomy. It turns out that he has found nothing that points definitively to homosexuality.

When Quinn’s speculations first emerged, either through his essay in Dialogue or from the announcement in the press of his forthcoming book, a storm of protest ensued in the form of “letters to the editor” in several Utah newspapers. It was not the press, but the public, that first recognized Quinn’s misrepresentations. At that time it became apparent that his work would create serious misunderstandings about Mormon leaders and their teachings and about other persons featured in his essay and his book. Quinn defended himself, saying that “the article did not claim Joseph Smith or Brigham Young were homosexual.” He went so far as to blame the public for misunderstanding him, but he created such false impressions by his own subtle insinuation.

While Latter-day Saints may resist Quinn’s sophistry, it seems that the academic and especially the homosexual worlds will be enthralled by his claims. The initial publicity Quinn’s book has

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20 George L. Mitton replied to Quinn’s letter, saying that “the many letters [in the press] in response show either that he did not make himself clear about his claims, or that the public fell for his innuendo and gained the very impression he intended to engender.” “Quinn’s Research Both Shallow and Skewed,” Logan (Utah) Herald Journal, 2 April 1996, 6.
received gives some indication of the confusion and misunderstanding it is likely to induce in non-Mormon circles. From publications that are influential in informing librarians, booksellers, and those responsible for providing book notices and reviews in the press, we get some indication of how it is likely to be received, and how it is being promoted:

1. Quinn "argues that the Mormon Church in 19th century America was actually very tolerant of same-sex relationships... founder Joseph Smith... openly accepted homoerotic relationships."21

2. "Quinn takes a fascinating look into the rise of proscriptions against same-sex relationships in 19th-century and early 20th-century Mormonism. Quinn's controversial thesis is that, contrary to contemporary teaching, the Mormon church once accepted and condoned same-sex relationships and that these relationships were practiced by church leaders."22

3. "Quinn... has written a book that is nothing short of astonishing. Who could have possibly imagined the tolerance with which same-sex relationships were accepted by the Mormon Church... [He] demonstrates, with thorough documentation, several examples of long-term relationships among Mormon same-sex couples and the environment in which they flourished. His extraordinary accomplishment is especially notable for the subtlety of his claims and the nuanced interpretation he gives them, all supported by exhaustive documentation."23

The following quotations are from magazines directed to persons with a homosexual point of view. It is important to note that each of these writers not only had access to Quinn's book, but interviewed him about it for their articles. Quinn thus had an opportunity to prevent or correct misunderstandings. Furthermore, apparently neither homosexual tabloid was aware of a debate within the University of Illinois Press over whether to advertise Quinn's book as Mormon history or homosexual history—two areas in which they specialize.

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21 Publishers Weekly, as quoted on the dust jacket—showing that even the University of Illinois Press misunderstands because of Quinn's innuendo; emphasis added.
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (LDS) doesn’t tolerate in the slightest those of us who tread on life’s sexual outskirts. There is a rich history to this animosity—a history that paradoxically begins with the church’s onetime support for same-sex affection. . . . It wasn’t always this way. According to historian Quinn’s illuminating new book, same-sex love and intimacy, expressed in a variety of nonerotic ways, was common among the Mormons and throughout America in the 19th century. Sexual relations between people of the same gender were also common and, while technically “sinful,” seemed to be understood as a fact of life—heterosexual adultery was of graver concern.24

In our judgment no greater hoax has been put over on the academic community (since the work of forger Mark Hofmann) than D. Michael Quinn’s book Same-Sex Dynamics. Jeff Ofstedahl illustrates how Quinn’s book misleads and misinforms:

It seems ironic that a church whose founder advocated the idea of men sleeping together would, some 150 years later, be working tirelessly in its quest against homosexuality to further its modern-day moral/political agenda. . . . Was Joseph Smith a bisexual? “You have to realize that Smith was a man of his times,” Quinn told the Echo in an interview. Same-sex emotional and physical intimacy was just as much a part of the Mormon culture as it was the American culture in the 19th century.24

It is evident that Quinn’s book has the potential to cause widespread confusion and false perception. We cannot in this essay respond to every false perception that has arisen or is likely to arise as a result of Quinn’s shoddy scholarship, but we will provide representative examples of his dubious methodology.

Joseph Smith and the Arms of Love

Since the early days of the church, Latter-day Saints have faced a barrage of false claims about Joseph Smith. Despite the efforts of the Saints to respond to these charges, they are parroted by their enemies to deceive the unwary. Now, as a result of Quinn’s book, we should not be surprised to see another wave of preposterous claims emerge. The opining by homosexual activists that we have already quoted provides some indication of the potential harm that may come from Quinn’s propaganda.

We will first scrutinize Quinn’s claims about what Joseph Smith “taught” (p. 231). Quinn quotes a passage out of context from one of Joseph’s sermons. (As we will soon show, the context changes the meaning significantly.) Quinn claims that the Mormon prophet “advocated” having “same-sex bedmates,” or that he “encouraged same-sex friends” to sleep in the same bed, conversing with “loving pillow talk” (pp. 89, 381). This is, of course, Quinn’s language, and not Joseph Smith’s. It illustrates Quinn’s common pattern of quoting someone and then paraphrasing in such a way as to distort that meaning. Quinn quotes from the sermon of 16 April 1843 as it was reflected in the notes of LDS apostle (and later president) Wilford Woodruff (pp. 87, 89, 409–10):

two who were vary friends indeed should lie down upon the same bed at night locked in each other[’s] embrace talking of their love & should awake in the morning together. They could immediately renew their conversation of love even while rising from their bed.28

Quinn then quotes a parallel passage from the History of the Church, based on the notes or recollection of LDS apostle Willard Richards (pp. 87, 99 n. 19, 232, 379, 381, 410):

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26 D&C 123 makes it mandatory that the Saints gather this literature and provide responses.
27 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 110 n. 15.
it is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other's embrace and renew their conversation. (p. 379)

Quinn uses these citations throughout his book, claiming that in both "same-sex bedmates" are "described by the prophet" (p. 99 n. 19). Then, without evidence to support his assertion, Quinn concludes that "the Mormon prophet Joseph Smith enjoyed bedtime snuggling with male friends throughout his life" (p. 87).

Quinn also repeatedly claims that Joseph Smith "revised the common interpretation that God destroyed Sodom because its inhabitants preferred sex between men" (pp. 268, 269, 276, 409), substituting instead a "nonsexual interpretation of Sodom's destruction" (p. 412). Quinn sees Joseph Smith's well-known confession of his own minor youthful failings as a "same-sex" issue (p. 409), although Joseph's comments do not appear to refer to sexual matters of any kind (see Joseph Smith—History 1:28). Further, Quinn sees the Wasp, a newspaper at Nauvoo, as claiming that John C. Bennett "engaged in sodomy," that "Joseph Smith had tolerated Bennett's homoeroticism," and that it "even printed one apostle's implication that Joseph Smith himself had also engaged in an 'immoral' act with a man" (p. 266).

All Quinn's claims are expressed in a matter-of-fact style as though beyond question. However, it is the responsibility of the historian to inform readers of critical background and especially to help those who know little about Joseph Smith's history and teachings. This Quinn fails to do, and we will show how that distorts his interpretation.

The fundamental incompatibility between Quinn's Joseph Smith and the texts he employs begins with the real Joseph's remarkable teachings on marriage and the family. These teachings have their origin in the Bible: "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him an help meet [i.e., proper or suitable]

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for him. . . . Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife,” and the man and woman, having been created “in the image of God,” received a commandment to “be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth” (Genesis 2:18, 24; 1:27–28). Much of this was repeated by Jesus, who stressed its importance by adding that “what therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder” (Matthew 19:4–6).

It must be understood that in the early days of his ministry, Joseph Smith received a reaffirmation of the truth of these biblical principles by revelation from heaven (Moses 2:26–28; 3:18, 24; Abraham 4:26–28; 5:14, 18). Joseph Smith and the church did not regard these commandments as discretionary, disdaining them as deriving from old Hebrew myths and legends of a simpler day (see Joseph Smith—History 1:24–25). The preservation of these truths from the distant past was, instead, seen as providential, and their reaffirmation as a witness that they apply with equal force in our times, to be neglected at our peril.

Joseph Smith went beyond this in his later teachings on the eternal nature of the marriage covenant between a man and woman when entered into under divine authority. As a part of this covenant, there would be an opportunity for the faithful to participate in God’s creative work and to enjoy an eternal increase in their progeny. Hence the Lord said: “prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you; for all those who have this law revealed unto them must obey the same. . . . for no one can reject this covenant and be permitted to enter into my glory” (D&C 132:3–4), adding that the glory spoken of in the day of resurrection “shall be a fulness and a continuation of the seeds forever and ever . . . for herein is the work of my Father continued, that he may be glorified” (D&C 132:19, 63). Revelations given through Joseph Smith near the end of his life not only stressed the importance of male-female marriage and family, but magnified that importance by anticipating the eternities to come.

We have summarized these teachings because Quinn fails to do so and because they are essential to an understanding of the discourse of Joseph Smith from which Quinn takes his notion of “same-sex bedmates.” When we see what Joseph Smith’s discourse was really about, Quinn’s interpretation turns out to be
nonsense. The passage Quinn quotes is from a funeral sermon in which Joseph stressed the reality of the resurrection and sought thereby to bring comfort to the bereaved. This sermon was important, although the written record of it is incomplete. B. H. Roberts, considering this very sermon, wrote: "I would again remind the reader that these reports of remarks and discourses of the Prophet's are imperfect, having been written in long-hand, and in part from memory and therefore really are only synopses of what was said."30 The longest written account of this sermon is two or three pages,31 although "President Smith preached about two hours."32 In such a situation it is imperative to seek corroboration from Joseph Smith's teachings on other occasions. Since Quinn can find nothing to support his peculiar reading of fragmentary reports of a long sermon in any of Joseph Smith's other sermons, letters, or other writings and recollections, one must be very cautious in considering Quinn's speculation. It turns out that Quinn's interpretation is without justification, since it contradicts all Joseph Smith's well-documented teachings.

Four accounts of this funeral sermon from the journals of persons who heard it have been located. Levi Richards merely says, "Pres Smith preached on the resurrection &c ..." All agree that the basic topic was the resurrection, a fact that Quinn barely mentions in an endnote (p. 99 n. 19; compare p. 410). William Clayton's brief entry is significant:

Heard Pres. J[oseph Smith] preach on the resurrection shewing the importance of being buried with the saints & their relatives in as much as we shall want to

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31 All accounts are found in Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 194-99.
32 History of the Church, 5:363.
33 Ibid., 198. Rhoda Richards also recorded in her diary that "Brother Wd [Willard Richards] says he has heard the sweetest sermon from Joseph he ever heard in his life." Ibid., 199.
see our relatives first & shall rejoice to strike hands with our parents, children &c when rising from the tomb.34

Clayton reports that Joseph Smith advocated that family and friends should try to arrange to lie down (that is, be buried together) in nearby graves, so they can rejoice together as they come out of their graves at the resurrection. Joseph bases this very literal concept of the resurrection on a vision he had seen, and "aside from this discourse and the teachings given in the temple, no other account of Joseph Smith’s vision exists."35 The vision seems to have influenced all his later teachings. For example, only a few days before this sermon was given, he taught that "When the Savior shall appear we shall see him as he is. We shall see that he is a man like ourselves. And that sociality which exists among us here will exist among us there, only it will be coupled with eternal glory, which glory we do not now enjoy" (D&C 130:1-2).

The following from the History of the Church, based on Willard Richards’s account, shows Quinn’s excerpt from Joseph’s sermon in italicized type in the context in which it should appear:

I will tell you what I want. If tomorrow I shall be called to lie in yonder tomb, in the morning of the resurrection, let me strike hands with my father, and cry, “My father,” and he will say “My son, my son,” as soon as the rock rends and before we come out of our graves.

And may we contemplate these things so? Yes, if we learn how to live and how to die. When we lie down we contemplate how we may rise in the morning; and it is pleasing for friends to lie down together, locked in the arms of love, to sleep and wake in each other’s embrace and renew their conversation.

Would you think it strange if I relate what I have seen in vision in relation to this interesting theme? Those who have died in Jesus Christ may expect to

35 Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 278.
enter into all that fruition of joy when they come forth, which they possessed or anticipated here.

So plain was the vision, that I actually saw men, before they had ascended from the tomb, as though they were getting up slowly. They took each other by the hand and said to each other, “My father, my son, my mother, my daughter, my brother, my sister.” And when the voice calls for the dead to arise, suppose I am laid by the side of my father, what would be the first joy of my heart? To meet my father, my mother, my brother, my sister; and when they are by my side, I embrace them and they me.36

Joseph Smith describes a scene of intense joy—a family scene. The use of the expression *the arms of love* is significant, for it is a scriptural allusion referring to the love with which the Lord surrounds the faithful, at the resurrection or otherwise (2 Nephi 1:14–15; D&C 6:20).

Wilford Woodruff’s account yields the same results. Again Quinn’s selective excerpt is in italicized type:

Considered Nauvoo would be a burying place for the Saints & Should he die he considered it would be a great Blessing to be buried with the saints & esspecially to be buried with his father yes he wanted to lie by the side of his father that when the trump of God should sound & the voice of God should say ye Saints arise that when the tomb should birst he could arise from the grave & first salute his father & say O my father! & his father say O my son!! as they took each other by the hand he wished next to salute his brothers & sisters & then the Saints ... the bodies will be caught up to meet the Lord & the Saints will all be brought together though they were scattered upon the face of the whole earth yet they would not as readily salute each other as though they lay down & rose up together from the same bed, To bring it to the understanding it would be

upon the same principle as though two who were vary friends indeed should lie down upon the same bed at night locked in each other embrace talking of their love & should awake in the morning together they could immediately renew their conversation of love even while rising from their bed but if they were alone & in sperate apartments they could not as readily salute each other as though they were together ... I saw the graves open & the saints as they arose took each other by the hand ... & great Joy and glory rested upon them.37

The expression vary friends indeed38 in Woodruff’s account has special significance. Quinn interprets it as meaning “same-sex” friends. However, the accounts say nothing about “same-sex” anything. What was on Joseph’s mind when this discourse was given? In the revelation on eternal marriage, the Lord had told Joseph to “prepare thy heart to receive and obey the instructions which I am about to give unto you” (D&C 132:3). The time had come to begin the preparation of the people to receive the new understanding, and a knowledge of the doctrine of a literal resurrection provided the essential first step. In this very discourse he said it “is my meditation all the day ... to know how I shall make the Saints of God comprehend the visions that roll like an overflowing surge before my mind. ... Let these truths sink down in our hearts, that we may even here begin to enjoy that which shall be in full hereafter.”39 Joseph Smith seems to have chosen funeral sermons to introduce new teachings. This sermon appears to have been his attempt to prepare them for his understanding of eternal marriage and family that was to follow.

And Quinn is also in error when he says that the sermon never once mentioned husband-wife relationships ... remarkable in a sermon on loving relationships in this life and in the resurrection during which the prophet repeated spoke of “brothers and friends,” fathers

38 “Vary” is Woodruff’s usual spelling of “very” throughout his journal. See editor’s note at ibid., 3:370.
39 History of the Church, 5:362.
and sons, mothers, daughters and sisters. Smith's silence concerning husbands and wives was deafening in this sermon about attachments of love . . . but I do see that as the first Mormon expression of male bonding" (p.139).

Do not mothers and fathers, seen together in eternal glory, reflect such relationships? Joseph also said in the same sermon: "To Marcellus Bates let me administer comfort. You shall soon have the company of your companion in a world of glory."40 This is "the closest allusion to the doctrine of eternal marriage the Prophet had yet made in public discourse."41

What then did Joseph Smith or Wilford Woodruff mean by "vary friends indeed"? The intensity of the friendship expressed, and the setting in which it appears, refers to husband and wife. While today the word "friend" normally refers to persons who are not relatives, that was not the way Joseph Smith used the word. He regarded the marriage of husband and wife as that of eternal and loving friends. Compare the following expressions to his wife Emma, written over a period of years in several letters when he was away from home:

I am your sincere friend and husband.

I feel for you for I know you[r] state and that others do not but you must comfort yourself knowing that God is your friend in heaven and that you have one true and living friend on Earth your Husband[.]

Dear Emma do you think that my being cast into prison by the mob renders me less worthy of your friendship[?] Oh Emma . . . do not forsake me nor the truth but remember me, if I do not meet you again in this life may God grant that we may meet in heaven, I cannot express my feelings, my heart is full, Farewell Oh my

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40 History of the Church, 5:363.
41 Ehat and Cook, Words of Joseph Smith, 279 n. 11.
kind and affectionate Emma I am yours forever your 
Hu[s]band and true friend[.]  

Oh my affectionate Emma, I want you to remember 
that I am a true and faithful friend, to you and the chil- 
dren, forever, my heart is intwined around you[r]s for- 
ever and ever, oh may God bless you all amen.42  

Wilford Woodruff’s use of the word friendship is even more 
helpful in determining its meaning at that time. Woodruff was 
marrid to Phoebe Carter at the home of Joseph Smith in 1837. 
The following references to matrimony and friendship are found 
in excerpts taken from his journal account of the wedding day 
when they and others were married. He seems to anticipate in 
some measure the doctrine of eternal marriage:

Marriage being an institution of heaven & honourable 
in all, [we] accordingly accepted the honour ... by 
joining hands ... in the bonds of matrimony and took 
upon ourselves the marriage Covenant. ...  

... While all nature smiled without[,] friendships 
purest joys were felt beneath a prophets roof where 
brides and bridesgroom found a welcome reception, 
While by law with the nuptial cord their hands were 
bound their congenial hearts in one, lay cemented 
bearing the seal of Eternal life. Their friendship 
formed from principle pure, virtue unsullied, bid 
refinement oe'r those hearts to rule, possessing the love 
of God the ownly foundation of true friendship. 

... Being clothed in the spirit through the power 
of the priesthood he pronounced upon the wedded heads 
and their posterity blessing[s] that ne’r decay. 
While heaven smiles upon the Elders of Israel[,] 
friendship presents each with a bride as a help meet. 

O heaven protect the four that they their covenants 
may fulfill that friendship may grow old But pure and

42 The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith, comp. and ed. Dean C. Jesse (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 350, 253, 409, 362-63, 368, emphasis added.
strong as death that peace and harmony may crown their lives. Let God direct their steps[,] their hearts possess his love[,] while personal friendship joins their hearts and hands in one. May light and truth their way direct until they meet the great bridegroom.43

Woodruff inscribed as a heading “Matrimony” at the beginning of the account of his wedding, and at the end placed a Latin phrase like a seal, and which appears thus: Vera amicitia est sempiterna [true friendship is eternal].44 Woodruff later used language much like Joseph Smith in referring to his “wife & friend”—she was his “Companion & friend,” or “my companion whom God hath given me for a bosom friend & a help-meet.”45 Husbands and wives are thus the “vary friends indeed.” But Quinn reads “same-sex bedmates” into the reports of Joseph Smith’s sermon.

Quinn’s assertion that Joseph Smith “enjoyed bedtime snuggling with male friends throughout his life” (p. 87) is gratuitous. This is one of Quinn’s deft ambiguities; this statement has no basis in fact. He offers two examples of Joseph sleeping near another man. We should not be surprised if there were other occasions, for his own evidence shows how crowded homes often made such sleeping arrangements necessary in Joseph Smith’s day (pp. 87–91). But it does not necessarily follow that Joseph “enjoyed” the tight quarters. In Quinn’s first example we find young Joseph Smith in the Knight home, boarding with a large family while he worked at the farm and sawmill. Of this, Joseph Knight Jr. said that his “father hired many hands. In 1826 he hired Joseph Smith, Jr. Joseph and I worked together and slept together. My father said Joseph was a man of truth and the best hand he ever hired.”46 Quinn reads this as evidence of something erotic, ignoring the hyperbole and folk poetry expressed by friends

43 Kenney, Wilford Woodruff’s Journal, 1:140–41, emphasis added, and spelling as in the original.
44 Ibid., 1:140–41.
working in a material or spiritual cause. Such crude literalism creates images that distort history.

In Quinn's other example we find Joseph lying on the floor in the jail at Carthage, Illinois, the night before his martyrdom. Here is Dan Jones's own account, with Quinn's selection of words (p. 87) in italics:

Late, we retired to rest, Joseph and [his brother] Hyrum on the only bedstead while 4 or 5 lay side by side on mattresses on the floor, Dr. Richards sitting up writing untill his last candle left him in the dark; the report of a gun, fired close by, caused Joseph whose head was by a window, to arise, leave the bed and lay himself by my side in close embrace; soon after Dr. Richards retired to the bed and while I thought all but myself and heaven asleep, Joseph asked in a whisper if I was afraid to die. "Has that time come think you? Engaged in such a cause I do not think that death would have many terrors," I replied. "You will see Wales and fulfill the mission appointed you ere you die" he said. I believed his word and relied upon it through trying scenes which followed. All the conversation evinced a presentiment of an approaching crisis.

In the History of the Church we read that Joseph Smith

lay himself on the floor, having Dan Jones on his left, and John S. Fullmer on his right. Joseph laid out his right arm, and said to John S. Fullmer, "Lay your head on my arm for a pillow, Brother John;" and when all were quiet they conversed in a low tone about the prospects of their deliverance. Joseph gave expression to several presentiments that he had to die, and said "I

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47 Quinn arbitrarily changes this to "in a close embrace," a form not found in the text.
48 Dan Jones to Thomas Bullock, 20 January 1855, in Ronald D. Dennis, ed., "The Martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith," BYU Studies 24/1 (1984): 101, spelling and punctuation as in the original. Jones was to fulfill the prophecy, going to Wales and bringing in about four thousand converts, including the family of Evan Stephens discussed below.
would like to see my family again.” and “I would to
God that I could preach to the Saints in Nauvoo once
more.”49

Our readers must judge whether this was a likely setting for a tryst. The incident seems rather to show the nobility of Joseph Smith’s character and that of the honorable men with him.

Quinn claims that Joseph Smith “revised the common interpretation that God destroyed Sodom because its inhabitants preferred sex between men” (p. 268). This claim needs an appropriate burial. It is true that, in a very special context, Joseph said that Sodom and Gomorrah “were destroyed for rejecting the Prophets,”50 but Joseph was giving a talk on the kingdom of God and how it is present whenever God sends his messengers. He taught that “in consequence of rejecting the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the Prophets whom God hath sent, the judgments of God have rested upon people, cities, and nations, in various ages of the world,” and that this was true of Sodom.51 Joseph said that at one time Sodom rejected prophets. This rejection was reflected in their transgressions. All transgressions, sexual and otherwise, are included within Joseph Smith’s language.

Quinn refers to the “Protestant claim that Sodom perished due to sexual sins” (p. 269). This statement of the “common interpretation” is oversimplified. The “common interpretation” also acknowledges other sins at Sodom. The sexual sins Quinn mentions were considered especially “abominable.” The interpretation is based on several biblical texts, from both the Old and New Testaments, which Joseph Smith and the Saints have continued to embrace. Joseph’s understanding can be illuminated by a review of the appropriate passages in his “translation” of the Bible, in which he furthered the “common interpretation.”52 For example, in Romans 1:24–32, Joseph Smith strengthened Paul’s condemnation of homosexual conduct, using the word inexcus-

49 History of the Church, 6:600–601, punctuation as in the original.
50 History of the Church, 5:257.
51 History of the Church, 5:256.
52 We discuss below in greater detail Joseph Smith’s opposition to homosexuality under the heading “Consistency of Church Teachings on Homosexuality,” but cite here one example of Joseph Smith’s disgust for homosexuality written elsewhere in his interpretation of the Bible.
able. These are matters pertaining to an accurate understanding of Mormon moral doctrine. Yet Quinn tries to make it appear that Joseph Smith did not think that Sodom’s sexual misbehavior was sinful. This is indefensible. Quinn misinforms his readers by withholding the context.

John C. Bennett and “the Mormon Hierarchy”

Though John C. Bennett’s career at Nauvoo is well-known, a brief summary is necessary to provide a setting for what we wish to say about Quinn’s special use of the Bennett affair. B. H. Roberts describes Bennett as “the ‘Benedict Arnold’ of The Church at Nauvoo.” Coming to Nauvoo with apparently good credentials, “Dr.” Bennett soon ingratiated himself with the Saints. Bennett was given responsible positions in the community, in the church, and at the University of Nauvoo. He defended the church in writing and speeches. But Bennett fell into sexual transgression, refused to repent, and was discharged from the university and excommunicated from the church. Thereupon, he embarked on a career of lectures and writings against the church and its leaders. His most infamous effort was a book he published in 1842.55 Bennett purported to expose the sexual misconduct of Joseph Smith and his associates, or as Bennett chose to call them—“the Mormon Hierarchy.” Actually, Bennett tells us more about himself than about the Saints, which, of course, also seems to be the case with Quinn.

Illinois Governor Ford said of Bennett that he

was probably the greatest scamp in the western country. I have made particular enquiries concerning him, and have traced him in several places in which he had lived before he had joined the Mormons in Ohio,

53 The most complete account of Bennett is the recent biography by Andrew F. Smith, The Saintly Scoundrel: The Life and Times of Dr. John Cook Bennett (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1997). Quinn endorses this work on the dust jacket.
54 Roberts, Rise and Fall of Nauvoo, 73.
55 John C. Bennett, The History of the Saints; or, An Exposé of Joe Smith and Mormonism (Boston: Leland & Whiting, 1842).
56 Ibid., 257, 217, emphasis added.
Indiana and Illinois, and he was everywhere accounted the same debauched, unprincipled and profligate character. He was a man of some little talent, and then [1840–41] had the confidence of the Mormons, and particularly their leaders.57

One historian reports the following about the effects of Bennett’s attacks on the Saints after his departure from Nauvoo:

It was the sensational journalism of the day and provoked a wave of anti-Mormon feeling in the Middle West. In the fall of 1842 Bennett published his book in Boston and quickly received national attention. . . . Such lurid attacks not only influenced a credulous reading audience in the 1840’s, but have had a continuing influence upon many historians who have accepted them as valid judgments by reliable contemporary observers. Historians ought to have known better (probably some of them did). The literature of exposé gives little insight into the Mormon movement, but it does provide a clue to the origins and character of anti-Mormon feelings which reached a fever pitch on a number of occasions in the nineteenth century.58

Consider the following absurd, self-contradictory, and extravagant passage from Bennett’s book, in which he claimed that “the Mormon Hierarchy” were

guilty of infidelity, deism, atheism; lying, deception, blasphemy; debauchery, lasciviousness, bestiality; madness, fraud, plunder; larceny, burglary, robbery, perjury; fornication, adultery, rape, incest; arson, treason, and murder; and they have out-heroded Herod, and


out-deviled the devil, slandered God Almighty, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Angels.\textsuperscript{59}

Bennett overplayed his hand with his lurid language and descriptions. John Taylor said of Bennett:

I was well acquainted with him. At one time he was a good man, but fell into adultery, and was cut off from the Church for his iniquity ... he then went lecturing through the country, and commenced writing pamphlets for the sake of making money, charging so much for admittance to his lectures, and selling his slanders. His remarks, however, were so bad, and his statements so obscene and disgraceful, that respectable people were disgusted.\textsuperscript{60}

Quinn uses Bennett to suggest that Joseph Smith was indifferent about homosexual conduct, when in reality the evidence underlines Joseph’s strong opposition to it. Quinn asserts, as though it is a certainty, that the “first known instance of homoerotic behavior in Mormon history involved John C. Bennett” (p. 266). This was more than a decade after the organization of the church, and, if true, would demonstrate a low incidence of homosexual sin. Quinn goes on to say that the Nauvoo \textit{Wasp} “claimed that Bennett had ... engaged in sodomy,” as well as heterosexual adultery (p. 266). But the evidence of Bennett’s homosexual conduct is not at all as certain as Quinn would have us believe. The statement in the \textit{Wasp} speaks of Bennett’s “adultery, fornication and—we were going to say (Buggery),”\textsuperscript{61} a tentative and guarded suggestion or suspicion. Andrew Smith notes that “no support for this charge was offered, and perhaps it was made in the heat of battle.”\textsuperscript{62} Quinn claims that Samuel W. Taylor “was the first modern writer to assert that Bennett had homoerotic relationships at Nauvoo” (p. 291 n. 13). Andrew Smith touches on this:

\textsuperscript{59} Bennett, \textit{History of the Saints}, 257.
\textsuperscript{60} \textit{History of the Church}, 5:81.
\textsuperscript{61} \textit{Nauvoo Wasp}, Extra, 27 July 1842, 2.
\textsuperscript{62} Smith, “Saintly Scoundrel,” 112.
Before Bennett left Nauvoo, [Joseph] Smith visited [Francis] Higbee and found him in a bed on the floor. The editor of the Times and Seasons [John Taylor] refused to print the next part of Joseph Smith’s testimony, stating that it was “too indelicate for the public eye or ear” and was “revolting, corrupt, and disgusting.” Samuel W. Taylor concluded that the only charge that was worse than what was already published was sodomy. Taylor presumed that Higbee was with Bennett on the floor. Since Bennett never denied the charge, perhaps he was a bisexual.63

Quinn should face the consequence of his agreement with Samuel Taylor. The Saints in Nauvoo regarded “homoerotic relationships” as “revolting, corrupt, and disgusting.” These words of John Taylor fly in the face of Quinn’s unfounded claim that Latter-day Saint leadership “regarded sodomy as far less serious than fornication or adultery” (pp. 270, 288).

Quinn’s only other purported evidence of Bennett’s possible involvement in homosexual practices at Nauvoo is a comment of Brigham Young, which we again quote with Quinn’s excerpt in italics: “I told Dr. Bennett[t] that one charge was seducing young women, and leading young men into difficulty—he admitted it—if he had let young men and women alone it would have been better for him” (p. 268).64 Quinn sees this as “Young’s reference to John C. Bennett’s bisexual conduct” (p. 268), but it is more likely a reference to his participation in and encouragement of adulterous heterosexual practices, and possibly to abortion (see p. 268). Bennett, Quinn says, was excommunicated “for seducing a group of women whom he had also encouraged to have sex with anyone he sent to them” (p. 266). This sounds like prostitution involving men and women. Quinn later cites only the “young men” part of the quotation, but that gives a false impression of the text (p. 270).

64 Times and Seasons 5 (15 May 1844): 539.
The delay in excommunicating Bennett offers Quinn the opportunity to claim that “Joseph Smith had tolerated Bennett’s homoeroticism” (p. 266). But if there was a delay, it applied to all of Bennett’s transgressions. Joseph Smith later regretted the delay, which he agreed to on the basis of Bennett’s tearful pleading and promises to reform. It must be remembered that Bennett had also done good and useful things. The Lord had said that Bennett’s “reward shall not fail if he receive counsel” and “I have seen the work which he hath done, which I accept if he continue” (D&C 124:16–17). This seems to have encouraged Joseph to seek Bennett’s repentance.

Quinn also thinks that the adoption of a principle at Nauvoo that no one could be found guilty unless proven by two or three witnesses could be “construed as [Joseph’s] toleration for Bennett’s various sexual activities ... a burden of proof [that] helped shield Bennett’s sexual exploits” (p. 267, 408). This is conjecture. The rule applied to any crime, not just sexual transgressions. And the principle of witnesses was rooted in the Bible and reaffirmed in latter-day scriptures.

Quinn alleges that the church newspaper printed Elder Orson Pratt’s “implication that Joseph Smith himself had also engaged in an ‘immoral act’ with a man” (p. 266). This is Quinn’s interpretation, and not Pratt’s. A careful reading of the text and its background yields a different understanding of Pratt’s remark, which is taken from the brief minutes of a long public meeting held in Nauvoo on 22 July 1842. The purpose of the meeting was to consider the slander by Bennett—“the reports gone abroad, calumniating the character of Pres. Joseph Smith.” A resolution was presented to about one thousand, and all but two or three voted to affirm Joseph Smith’s moral character. Orson Pratt, who was disaffected from Joseph at the time, voted against the resolution. His disaffection resulted from falsehoods told by Bennett—Pratt thought that Joseph had acted improperly with his wife while he was away on a mission. Pratt explained at length his negative vote. Joseph then spoke in reply and asked Pratt the following:

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66 Times and Seasons 3 (1 August 1842): 869.
“Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or in any other way?”
Answer, by Elder O. Pratt, “Personally, toward the female sex, I have not.”

Quinn holds that the words “in any other way” are an allusion to homosexual conduct. Joseph Smith’s obvious purpose was to help Pratt see that he had become disaffected because of Bennett’s lies. “Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me toward the female sex, or [information received] in any other way?” Pratt admits that all he has is gossip. This interpretation fits the historical setting, while Quinn’s does not. For in the long discussion about what Bennett had done, leading up to the minutes in the *Times and Seasons*, no mention of a charge of homosexual conduct was made by Bennett. Moreover, Bennett’s slanderous book, with all the catalog of sins and crimes attributed to Joseph, does not include the charge of homosexual acts.

Quinn also neglects to indicate that when this brief exchange between Joseph Smith and Orson Pratt was first published a few days earlier, it read simply: “Question, to Elder Pratt — ‘Have you personally a knowledge of any immoral act in me?’ Answer, by Elder O. Pratt — ‘Personally, I have not.’” When the expanded version appeared, it was explained that “a mistake occurred in the minutes . . . inadvertently omitting some qualifying words in the question of Pres. Joseph Smith to Elder O. Pratt, and in his reply. The omission was without design and the proper corrections are [now] made.” Clearly the intent of the change was to be more specific than the general term “immoral” and to respond to Bennett’s charges of immorality with women. Certainly the Brethren who published the augmented version did not see it as adding to the charges against Joseph Smith, as Quinn’s strained interpretation demands.

After his fellow apostles counseled with him, Pratt saw his error and renewed his friendship with Joseph; he defended Joseph

69 *Nauvoo Wasp*, Extra, 27 July 1842, 2.
Smith's character the rest of his life. In his study of Pratt, T. Edgar Lyon noted that Pratt's disaffection was a matter

in which [Pratt] took no pride, and tried to forget. On one occasion, however, while speaking in Plano, Illinois, he told of this trial he had undergone at Nauvoo. . . . He said that it was because he had received his "information from a wicked source, from those disaffected," that he had turned against the Prophet. When he learned "the truth," he was satisfied. The "wicked source" could have been no other than Bennett. 70

All this occurred while Joseph Smith was introducing the doctrine of plurality of wives that had been revealed to him (D&C 132). At least in a preliminary way, Bennett was aware of this teaching. Bennett misled women with his own adulterous, irresponsible, and undisciplined version, promising he would marry, but having no intention of doing so. Thus "Joseph Smith's doctrine of plural marriage and Bennett's counterfeit version were . . . taught simultaneously and in secret at Nauvoo." 71 The result has been much confusion, and Quinn's ill-considered claims can only add to it.

**Brigham Young and the Society of Women**

Quinn informs us that Brigham Young was so "homosocial" that he preached that "there are probably but few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do" (pp. 66, 111, 413). As Quinn did with Joseph Smith, he also sets a stage to make it appear that Brigham was either unconcerned about or even favorable toward homosexual conduct. What Brigham Young said is as follows:

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I will acknowledge with brother Kimball, and I know it is the case with him, that I am a great lover of women. In what particular? I love to see them happy, to see them well fed and well clothed, and I love to see them cheerful. I love to see their faces and talk with them, when they talk in righteousness; but as for anything more I do not care. There are probably but few men in the world who care about the private society of women less than I do. I also love children, and I delight to make them happy.\textsuperscript{72}

Brigham Young clearly stressed that his love for women is genuine and godly, and not based on lust. Lust is a temporary thing, and essentially selfish, without proper concern for the long-term well-being of the object. The doctrine Brigham taught stresses true and godly love as an eternal thing, with deep and abiding concern for the welfare of the beloved.\textsuperscript{73} Brigham Young was mindful that he was not talking only to the Saints, but says in the same address that “our sermons are read by tens of thousands outside of Utah.”\textsuperscript{74} Brigham spoke against the fierce opposition to plural marriage, an opposition which often claimed in lurid and insulting terms that the practice was based on lust. Brigham was sensitive to these charges and wanted it understood that plural marriage was motivated by religious considerations, and not by lust for “the private society of women.” A talk by Heber C. Kimball, printed immediately before Brigham Young’s sermon, reflects this concern also:

Plurality of wives! ... Suffice it to say I have a good many wives and lots of young mustards that are growing, and they are a kind of fruitful seed. ... It is so with “Mormonism;” it will flourish and increase, and it will multiply in young “Mormons.” “To be plain about it, Mr. Kimball, what did you get these wives for?” The Lord told me to get them. “What

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{72}] Journal of Discourses, 5:99; Quinn’s excerpt in italics.
\item[\textsuperscript{73}] Consistent with this is the possibility that Brigham Young had in mind the “private society of women” as the stewardship of women, versus his role of provider, to which he alludes in the passage.
\item[\textsuperscript{74}] Journal of Discourses, 5:99.
\end{itemize}
for?" To raise up young "Mormons,"—not to have women to commit whoredoms with, to gratify the lusts of the flesh, but to raise up children. . . . The great men of the earth keep two to three, and perhaps half-a-dozen private women. They are not acknowledged openly, but are kept merely to gratify their lusts.75

Quinn’s use of Brigham Young’s language seems wide of the mark. He garbles the historical setting, twisting it to fit his purposes. We must stress the obvious heterosexual orientation of a man who had many wives and was the father of fifty-seven children (pp. 111, 122 n. 19). Brigham Young was a defender of marriage, and of the sacred nature of family relationships. In the Nauvoo period, when Brigham Young became the leader of the church, he stressed the strong scriptural basis for marriage:

Besides repentance, baptism, reception of the Holy Ghost, and many other essentials, the UNION of male and female, both temporal and spiritual, is of as much importance before God as all the rest; for the man is not without the woman, neither is the woman without the man in the Lord. And again, what God hath joined together, let not man put asunder, for the especial reason, that all contracts for time and eternity, have to be made while we sojourn in the flesh: “In the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage[,]” but the great lineage, through the priesthood, and the everlasting Covenant sealed on earth, and sealed in heaven, continues throughout all generations.76

Again, later in Utah, Brigham Young emphasized the importance of marriage:

I wish the whole people of the United States could hear me now[.] I would say to them, let every man in the land over eighteen years of age take a wife, and then go to work with your hands and cultivate the earth,

or labor at some mechanical business, or some honest trade to provide an honest living for yourselves and those who depend upon you for their subsistence; observing temperance, and loving truth and virtue; then would the women be cared for, be nourished, honored and blest, becoming honorable mothers of a race of men and women farther advanced in physical and mental perfection than their fathers. This would create a revolution in our country, and would produce results that would be of incalculable good. If they would do this, the Elders of this Church would not be under the necessity of taking so many wives.77

We have quoted Brigham Young’s words to show how he represented the scriptural principle of marriage. He repeated such counsel many times. In all of Brigham Young’s numerous sermons and writings, Quinn finds only one isolated passage that he wrenches out of context and then misconstrues in his own peculiar way. Quinn relies on insinuation and innuendo to make it appear that Brigham Young departed from these teachings in practice. The following will illustrate Quinn’s technique.

Quinn turns to phrenology, a pseudoscience of the nineteenth century, to suggest that Brigham Young was among those who “had phrenological charts with higher scores for same-sex Adhesiveness [friendship] than for opposite-sex [attractiveness] . . . [a] ratio that phrenologists regarded as potentially ‘unnatural’” (pp. 110–11). Quinn then concludes that “since Mormons were familiar with phrenological interpretations, they were not surprised by Brigham’s public statement that he was less interested in ‘the private society of women’ than most men were” (p. 111). How does Quinn know that Latter-day Saints were not surprised?

From a helpful study of Mormon interest in phrenology, it is evident that the fad affected some Latter-day Saints along with the rest of society.78 Many of the curious solicited phrenological readings or “delineations” based on measurement of the skull, and some placed credence in them. But Joseph Smith and

77 Journal of Discourses, 12:194.
Brigham Young did not advocate phrenology. Joseph's chart was copied into his history, but Joseph said he gave it a place there "for the gratification of the curious, and not for respect to Phrenology."\(^{79}\) Brigham was anything but complimentary when referring to his experience with phrenology.\(^{80}\) Interest gradually waned, as with "the fading of phrenology's scientific [respectability] it lost its appeal."\(^{81}\) Quinn, however, makes much of the casual dabbling in phrenology by some of the Brethren, using it to enhance his homosexual agenda.

Next Quinn peeps into Brigham's private life to learn that "despite fathering fifty-seven children, Young had a reputation for ignoring the emotional and sexual needs of his wives" (p. 111).\(^{82}\) Reputation with whom? Quinn's prime witness is Ann Eliza Young, the wife of Brigham who left him and wrote an "exposé," billing herself on the title page as "Brigham Young's Apostate Wife."\(^{83}\) Commercially motivated, she wrote in the genre of dime novels or historical fiction. Quinn cites several passages from her book (p. 122 n. 19), but her gossipy and extravagant claims defy belief. Before placing confidence in her, Quinn should have taken seriously Hugh Nibley's long and devastating review of her purpose, her book, and its historical reliability.\(^{84}\) Of course, a literature praising Brigham's model home life does exist.\(^{85}\) One would, however, expect to find some tensions and feelings of neglect in such a large family, particularly where the husband and father wrestled with matters of church and state. Some tensions are found in most monogamous families, but to

\(^{79}\) Ibid., 43, quoting the handwritten version in the LDS Church Archives; compare *History of the Church*, 5:55.

\(^{80}\) Bitton and Bunker, "Phrenology among the Mormons," 53.

\(^{81}\) Ibid., 58.

\(^{82}\) One reviewer stressed this sentence as his example of Quinn's innuendo. Byron C. Short, *Christian Century* 114/2 (15 January 1997): 57.

\(^{83}\) Ann Eliza Young, *Wife No. 19, or The Story of a Life in Bondage, Being a Complete Exposé of Mormonism, and Revealing the Sorrows, Sacrifices and Sufferings of Women in Polygamy* (Hartford: Dustin, Gilman, 1875).


\(^{85}\) Clarissa Young Spencer, *Brigham Young at Home* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1940).
find some of these in Brigham Young’s family is not grounds to assume, without further evidence, that he was emotionally alienated from his wives and family by same-sex attraction.

Quinn thinks that “dancing in pioneer Mormon society was unique in America because Brigham Young and other LDS Church leaders sometimes organized male-only dances” (p. 86). So did Jewish men, mountain men, Native Americans, sailors, miners, Civil War soldiers, and others separated from women by employment or ritual. Such behavior among the Saints was part of a broader cultural context and not unique in America. When Brigham was leader at Nauvoo, “Mormon men danced with other men at church headquarters in Nauvoo—often in the LDS temple there” (p. 85). What is Quinn’s purpose here? What does he want his readers to think was Brigham’s purpose? Dancing was considered a wholesome form of recreation and exercise, and the types of dances seldom involved more physical contact than most athletic contests do now. The Saints joined in activities regarded as “harmless dances.”

At Nauvoo, the dance had a religious and even ritual dimension: “The spirit of dancing increased until the whole floor was covered with dancers, and while we danced before the Lord, we shook the dust from off our feet as a testimony against this nation.” In Utah, Brigham said: “Those that have kept their covenants and served their God, if they wish to exercise themselves in any way, to rest their minds and tire their bodies, go and enjoy yourselves in the dance, and let God be in all your thoughts in this as in all other things.”

Consider also this account of Brigham Young’s company en route to Utah:

In this company of one hundred and forty eight there were only three women, and these were married. Many forms of amusement were participated in, including some rough-and-tumble dancing in which the men whirled one another about. . . . Brigham called his company together and said, “I have let the brethren

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88 Journal of Discourses, 6:149.
dance and fiddle . . . night after night to see what they will do.” He spoke sharply to them of excesses in all things. 89

Brigham Young sought to keep dancing within proper bounds. Several times he curtailed dancing when it appeared to be lacking in decorum. 90 He thought that the brethren must be “praising the Lord in the dance.” 91 Quinn may have intended something entirely nonerotic when he refers to such all-male dances. If so, his meaning is obscured by his frequent use of homosexual language to describe a clearly heterosexual world.

Quinn makes an irresponsible claim concerning Brigham Young’s position on homosexual adultery: “If Young regarded homoerotic activities as sins (and I [Quinn] know of no evidence that he ever made such a statement), he apparently regarded sodomy as far less serious than fornication and adultery” (p. 270). Apparently? No evidence whatsoever supports this misleading claim. Brigham Young opposed all adulterous relationships, and sodomy is certainly one of them that is strongly condemned in the scriptures. Quinn tries to support his reading with a discussion that is essentially inaccurate, if not dishonest.

First Quinn says that Brigham’s “earlier statements [at Nauvoo] about Bennett’s ‘young men’ showed that Brigham Young was not shy about referring publicly to sodomy” (p. 270). Well, Brigham was not shy about expressing his view on any topic. It is highly unlikely he was speaking of anything but heterosexual transgressions, and Quinn’s brief reference to “young men” is deceptive when the original text mentions both “young men and women.” 92

Quinn tries to make it appear that Brigham Young did not care whether there was legislation in place to deal with sodomy when the Mormons were established in the West (pp. 272–73). This is rubbish, because as soon as they undertook to have a penal

90 Elden J. Watson, Manuscript History of Brigham Young, 1846–1847 (Salt Lake City: Watson, 1971), 3, 9, 265, 537, 546, 555.
92 Times and Seasons 5 (15 May 1844): 539.
code, sodomy was included as a crime. When the provisional State of Deseret enacted a penal code in early 1851, it had a clause to the effect that, "if any man or boy shall have, or attempt to have, any sexual intercourse with any of the male creation, on conviction thereof, they shall be deemed guilty of Sodomy, and be fined or imprisoned, or both, as the court may direct." Quinn was aware of this, for he cites this study in another connection (p. 296 n. 41). He simply withholds the fact that such legislation was enacted at an early date. Brigham Young was personally concerned about the establishment of the criminal code, and it "was no new idea; it seems to have been in process of development for over a year. Thus, on January 23, 1850, it is recorded that Thomas Bullock read to Brigham Young ‘a criminal code written by George A. Smith.’" Incidentally, this is a use of the word “sodomy” six or seven years before what Quinn claims was “the first known use by Mormons” (p. 271).

The influences on the development of morals-related legislation under Utah’s new territorial legislature are somewhat confused by the interaction with Federal authority, the belief in settling many problems by church courts, and the use of statutory language to prosecute for plural marriage in ways not intended when the legislation was adopted by the Latter-day Saints. Clearly, “Mormon opposition to judicial functioning in the territory was not an objection to the legal system as such but resulted from their fear that non-Mormons would control the courts and use the law as an instrument of persecution.” Quinn does not offer a helpful analysis of this situation. Brigham Young and the legislature could not have seen homosexual offenses as a pressing and immediate problem, since such offenses were virtually unknown among them. Quinn himself makes a list of “nineteenth-century Mormons who chose to have homoerotic experiences,” and, after

94 Ibid., 108.
the conjectural incident of John C. Bennett at Nauvoo, he does not find another instance until 1876, the year before Brigham's death (p. 362). When in 1864 a non-Mormon "committed an abominable outrage" on a young boy, Brigham said the judge found that "our legislators, never having contemplated the possibility of such a crime being committed in our borders, had made no provision for its punishment, and the criminal had to be discharged." 97 Utah's territorial legislature was made up of men who had limited experience in the development of legislation, and they had reason to be concerned about how their legislation would be construed by the courts. To some extent, it was a trial-and-error process. It is probable that the legislators felt that their more general language on "adultery, seduction, fornication, and lewd and lascivious cohabitation" would have been adequate. When the penal code was reviewed and reenacted, the California Code was used as a convenient model from a larger jurisdiction that had had more experience with the development of legislation and with criminal matters. The Deseret News explained in an editorial:

The members of the Salt Lake bar disapproved of the old penal statutes of this Territory, which, passed at different sessions of the Legislature, were scattered through the books and were inconvenient in form, as well as inadequate to the requirements of the Territory in its advanced condition and its mixed society, consequent upon the influx of a different class of population from its early settlers. A Penal Code was therefore drawn up, or rather adapted from the California statutes. 98

Quinn claims that the Utah legislature adopted the law against "every person who is guilty of the infamous crime against nature," not because "of any Mormon concern about same-sex intercourse," but because "it was part of the California code that Utah Territory adopted in its entirety" (p. 273). This is mere conjecture, unsupported by anything in the historical record. The

97 Millennial Star 27 (7 January 1865): 14.
same Deseret News editorial tells how the proposed code was reviewed by the legislature and the legal community in Utah and was changed and adapted as needed. There would have been ample opportunity for the removal or modification of unwanted language. Quinn’s discussion of Brigham Young and legislative history is typical of his shabby methodology. He leaves a distorted impression of Mormon intentions.99

George Q. Cannon and the Concept of Godly and Brotherly Love

Quinn uses a brief fragment from a discourse of George Q. Cannon to create a false impression by failing to mention the context of the talk, except to say that it was delivered on “Utah Pioneer Day in 1881” (p. 113). Quinn seems to want readers to believe that Cannon’s subject was homosexual “male bonding” (p. 139), “male-male love” (p. 113), and that he “praised male-male love” or “male-male intimacy.”100 These terms are, of course, Quinn’s—not Cannon’s. Once again Quinn employs the sexually ambiguous language of “bonding,” “love,” and “intimacy,” each of which has a broad spectrum of possible meanings. In the context of Cannon’s remarks, however, the references are to same-gender “non-erotic” relationships such as father-son, brother-brother, mother-daughter, sister-sister, and “brother and sister” Christian fellowship. Quinn may insist that he never intended homosexual meanings. But, if so, we have another example of his use of misleading, fuzzy language.

The context of Cannon’s speech is crucial. The Pioneer Day setting was most appropriate for the discourse. Cannon’s long and remarkable sermon is actually about the gathering of the Saints from many parts of the world, their willingness to uproot and leave their homes in response to the gospel call, and the impressive community love and unity Latter-day Saints enjoyed despite their varied backgrounds. Cannon speaks of the “gathering” and “oneness” of the people as taught to Joseph Smith by God, and

99 For a contemporary discussion of the continuity of morals legislation from the early period, see “Utah Laws against Sexual Crimes,” Deseret Evening News, 23 February 1882, 2.
100 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 110.
as found in the teachings of Jesus to the first apostles. He sees this as the working of the Spirit of God among the people and as a witness of the truth of Latter-day Saint claims to divine authority. Cannon’s discourse touches on the concept of true and chaste brotherly love and sisterly love in the gospel.

The following is an extended quotation from the passage from which Quinn takes his Cannon fragment (pp. 113, 417), again with the language he quotes shown in italics:

There is one thing that distinguishes the Latter-day Saints from every other people that I know anything about . . . and that is, they love one another. It is not in name, it is not a profession of love, but they [are] a people that love one another so strongly that they are willing to die for each other if it is necessary, and it is that deep and abiding love that binds them in union. Travel among the “Mormons” wherever you will, . . . this love is a distinguishing characteristic of the people, you behold it everywhere. *Men may never have beheld each other’s faces and yet they will love one another, and it is a love that is greater than the love of woman. It exceeds any sexual love that can be conceived of, and it is this love that has bound the [Mormon] people together.* It has been a cement that all the persecution, all the tribulation, and all kinds of trial could not dissolve or break; and the extraordinary feature of it all is . . . that this people who are thus bound together . . . are as diverse as it is possible to get the human family to be. . . . But who is there that asks among the “Mormons” or Latter-day Saints as to a man’s nationality? Who is it asks where a man or woman came from? . . . [They are] all living together as brothers, full of love for each other; none of that rancorous feeling that exists between nationalities is to be witnessed in

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101 For example: “And even so will I gather mine elect from the four quarters of the earth, even as many as will believe in me, and hearken unto my voice” (D&C 33:6); and “I say unto you, be one; and if ye are not one ye are not mine” (D&C 38:27); see also John 17.
Utah Territory. . . . What is it, then, that makes this people united? It is the outpouring, as I testify, of the Spirit of God . . . and these are the fruits of that spirit. . . . Jesus prayed in the last great prayer that he offered unto his Father that his disciples might be one even as he and his Father were one.103

Cannon's doctrine had a strong scriptural basis, as he explained on another occasion:

"A new commandment I give unto you," said Jesus to his disciples before his death, "that ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another" [see John 13:34–35]. This was to be so distinctive a trait, that by its presence men might know his disciples from those who had no claim to the title. Love, abiding and unchangeable, through the enjoyment of which men would lay down their lives for their friends [see John 15:13], was to be an accompaniment of the gospel of Jesus, and was the fruit of the Spirit he bestowed upon his followers. . . . The apostle John, also, gives the love the disciples had for their brethren as a sign, by which they might know they had passed from death unto life [see 1 John 3:13–16].104

This oneness was observed by Charles Dickens, who visited a Mormon emigrant ship as it was preparing to sail from England in 1863. Dickens was impressed with the quality of the people, as well as their order and discipline. There were eight hundred Mormon converts on board, and Dickens saw them as the "pick and flower of England."105 Dickens concluded his account with the following observation:

103 Ibid., 365–66.
104 George Q. Cannon, Writings from the 'Western Standard' (Liverpool: Cannon, 1864), 86.
I afterwards learned that a Despatch was sent home by the captain before he struck out into the wide Atlantic, highly extolling the behaviour of these Emigrants, and the perfect order and propriety of all their social arrangements. . . . I went on board their ship to bear testimony against them if they deserved it, as I fully believed they would; to my great astonishment they did not deserve it; and my predispositions and tendencies must not affect me as an honest witness. I went over the [ship's] side, feeling it impossible to deny that, so far, some remarkable influence had produced a remarkable result, which better known influences have often missed. 106

Dickens was also impressed by the Mormon agent he met on the ship. 107 It was George Q. Cannon, who supervised over 13,000 converts in their emigration and was well aware of the “remarkable influence” or brotherly love at work. 108

The “remarkable influence” observed by Dickens is the subject of Cannon’s Pioneer Day discourse. But Quinn quotes Cannon out of context. He infers that Cannon’s remarks contained homosexual overtones, although no basis for that inference is present when the complete text is considered. Quinn goes on to say, in regard to Cannon’s remark that the love he spoke of “exceeds any sexual love,” that Cannon “emphasized the platonic [or “nonerotic”] dimension of this male-male love” (p. 113). By saying Cannon “emphasized” the “nonerotic” dimension, Quinn suggests to the reader that Cannon may also have recognized an erotic dimension. Cannon actually spoke of a love and influence that is godly, brotherly, and without any erotic dimension.

106 Ibid., 402. For the background of this piece, see William Mulder and A. Russell Mortensen, eds., Among the Mormons: Historic Accounts by Contemporary Observers (New York: Knopf, 1958), 334–35. It is odd that this compilation did not include the meaningful closing passage quoted above.
Quinn recognizes a biblical allusion from the Old Testament, when Cannon says that “they will love one another, and it is a love that is greater than the love of woman” (p. 113). The allusion is to the love of David and Jonathan: “thy love to me was wonderful, passing the love of women” (2 Samuel 1:26). Quinn observes that one biblical interpretation apparently made among some is that David and Jonathan were “sexual lovers,” but he admits that “because David was a teenage polygamist and Jonathan fathered at least one child, most Bible readers and scholars regard [them] as platonic (or nonerotic) lovers” (p. 113). Cannon’s interpretation is like that held by most Hebrew scholars and the vast majority of others. Cannon held that the relationship of David and Jonathan was the godly love he saw manifested among the Mormon people. An understanding of this is needed to place the real Mormon view of brotherly love in stark contrast to the unreasonable homosexual interpretation proposed by Quinn.

Because our interpretation of the love of David and Jonathan will be important in a later portion of our essay, we now include the following passage from another of Cannon’s discourses, given several years later, which employs the same biblical imagery:

When men receive the everlasting Gospel and the Priesthood, there is a love begotten in their hearts for their fellowmen such as they never have felt before. Like the love of Jonathan for David, it is “passing the love of women.” It is stronger than the love of women. It overpowers it. Not that it quenches the love of women or makes it improper; but it is a greater love, it surpasses it. This is [also] the love that enters into the hearts of women who embrace the Gospel, and causes them to love the Elders of this Church as they never loved any one before. And it is a pure love. They love them as they would angels from heaven. It is not an unvirtuous love. It is a love that comes from God. It is the love of the Holy Ghost, the love of purity, the love of truth, the love that we would have for holy beings—a part of the love that we have for God Himself, and for our Lord and Savior Jesus. This love unites them together with a bond and strength of affection that was never known before. The restoration of this Gospel to
the earth has begotten a new love among mankind. It is a love that comes from God Himself, and it is poured out upon His children, and it makes us one, when we cherish it as we should do. It makes us love one another as no other beings upon the face of the earth can love, because . . . it is the love of God.\footnote{George Q. Cannon, in \textit{Deseret Weekly} 41 (4 October 1890): 486. Compare Brigham Young in \textit{Journal of Discourses}, 8:200.}

Cannon’s language involves a straightforward interpretation of the brotherly love of David and Jonathan and of the love of brothers and sisters in the community of Saints. It has no erotic implication.

**A Witness against Quinn’s Thesis**

Quinn devotes an entire chapter to an uncompleted essay by Mildred J. Berryman, written in the 1920s and 1930s.\footnote{Quinn cites the study as follows: “Mildred J. Berryman, ‘The Psychological Phenomena of the Homosexual,’ rough-typed on the back of stationery of the American Red Cross, Salt Lake City, Utah, with the last page of the study dated 13 November 1938, in the June Mazer Lesbian Collection, West Hollywood, California” (pp. 77, 148, 223, 360).} According to Quinn, Berryman was a “lesbian,” and she may have had a Mormon background. Berryman described her interviews with persons of her own acquaintance who spoke with frankness of their homosexual interests and conduct. Quinn entitles his chapter “The Earliest Community Study of Lesbians and Gay Men in America: Salt Lake City” (p. 195), and holds that “Berryman stands alone as an early interpreter of an American homosexual community” (p. 206). This may explain why Quinn treats the study at some length, since by doing this he garners the recognition of publishing a more detailed account of a study that had previously only been summarized briefly. It also affords him the opportunity to suggest, with his chapter title, that the Saints were homosexual pioneers of some sort. But Quinn undermines his own position when he finds that the Berryman study is “the only source for the views and experiences of early Utahns and Mormons who regarded themselves as homosexual” (p. 195, emphasis added). Despite the title of his book, Quinn is now well past the
nineteenth century, and one also wonders about the impression of certainty which he leaves about persons of that time who were not even remotely involved in such a study.

Importantly, Berryman’s study emboldens Quinn to engage in an unrestrained discussion of homosexuality in a Utah setting. Whatever value the Berryman study may have as a rare and early source on the self-perception of those interviewed, it is certainly of doubtful value in establishing Quinn’s basic hypothesis, either in regard to Mormons or to Americans at large. The “community” Quinn mentions is not Salt Lake City as a whole, but Berryman’s own limited circle of contacts over a “decades-long” period (p. 429) and perhaps from more than one locality. Nothing in her study indicated that the standards or teachings of the LDS Church influenced the behavior of those interviewed, nor did Berryman consider their sexual conduct in relation to the beliefs and practices of Latter-day Saints. The study included data on twenty-five women and eight men, and surely does not reflect an early twentieth-century Mormon toleration of homosexual conduct in any way. What it does accomplish is to open a window on the past that exposes how mistaken Quinn’s basic thesis really is.

Berryman’s manuscript was first described in 1977 by Vern and Bonnie Bullough, friends of Berryman who are well-known for their interest in the area of human sexuality and the history of homosexuality. The manuscript was willed to them after the death of Berryman, since she had lived for thirty years with Bonnie Bullough’s mother (p. 226). The Bulloughs were well-informed about Berryman’s circumstances; they claim that they


112 Berryman claimed to have been married twice, early in her life, but Quinn was unable to verify that (pp. 78, 196).
“often visited the two women, and M. B. [Mildred Berryman] frequently mentioned her manuscript, considering it her most precious possession, although she made no further move to finish it. . . . Her plan and the hope of our mother was that we would publish the findings . . . and thus help M. B. achieve her lifelong goal of making a contribution to the literature of lesbianism without endangering her privacy or the anonymity of her informants.”113 This passion for anonymity and a solicitude for others are reflected throughout Berryman’s study and in the treatment of her by the Bulloughs, who use only her initials. Such anonymity points to the lack of tolerance toward homosexuality in Utah and among Latter-day Saints. It is odd that Quinn fails to see this.

Quinn’s discussion of Berryman leaves the reader uncertain and confused and is full of contradictions. Quinn is in radical disagreement with the Bulloughs on important points, despite their firsthand knowledge and their obvious passion for writing about sexual matters. Thus Quinn insists that Berryman was a Mormon as a way of linking Latter-day Saints with homosexuality. Quinn’s evidence for a Mormon link is drawn from the early part of Berryman’s life. If she was a Mormon, it is probable that she was excommunicated, since she was clearly not a believer but an apostate. She is said, by the Bulloughs, to have “identified herself as a lifelong Episcopalian,” and they note that “her hatred of the Mormons grew with each passing year” (p. 200). At the time of her death, Berryman was a member of yet another church.114 The

113 Bullough and Bullough, “Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s,” 897-98.
114 For evidence of Berryman’s LDS membership, Quinn found a Mildred Berryman in the LDS Patriarchal Blessing Index and in the LDS Church census for 1930, evidence which the Bulloughs consider “made up data” (pp. 226–27). Quinn omits the information that the census card reads “not on record,” which must mean that, while living within the LDS ward area, she did not associate with the church, and perhaps was unknown by it there until she was visited during the census. The waters are further muddied by the possibility of another Mildred Berryman, since the LDS Family Search file lists one born six years earlier than the one Quinn claims to follow, and for whom a marriage is also shown. For Berryman’s non-Mormon affiliation with the Bountiful Community Church at her death, see notices in Deseret News, 8 November 1972, E-4, and Bountiful (Utah) Davis County Clipper, 10 November 1972, 4; 17 November 1972, 17.
Bulloughs strongly insisted that Berryman was not a Latter-day Saint, expressing "astonishment and disbelief" at the contrary suggestion (p. 226), and explicitly requested that their dissent on this and other matters be included in Quinn’s book (p. 228). They hold that “to call her a Mormon [at any point in her life] would be a disservice to the LDS Church and to what [she] stood for” (p. 228). Vern Bullough said that Berryman “was never a Mormon. . . . She regarded Mormons as inferior to her and was, to put in a word, a vile anti-Mormon”; he also declared that saying she was a Mormon “contradicted statements by Berryman” herself over a thirty-year period (p. 226). Quinn simply ignores Vern Bullough’s opinion.

The Bulloughs also believe Berryman’s study was started a decade later than Quinn surmises (p. 224). And the Bulloughs “are certain . . . that not all people in the study were Mormons and that [Berryman] herself certainly was not” (pp. 227–28). Quinn would have us believe that “many (possibly all) the persons in her study were of Mormon background,” when only one clear reference to that effect appears among all the interviews in her study (pp. 197, 362). Moreover, there does not appear to be any direct information in the Berryman study to show the position of the church in relation to any of Berryman’s people. The Bulloughs explained their understanding that while the “Mormon church . . . excommunicates homosexuals,” it “never moved against any of the Mormon members of the group or, to our knowledge, any of the other lesbians at that time” precisely because of their "success in disguising their sexual orientation."115

By that disguise, any “Mormons” in the group were surely attempting to avoid a church response to their apostasy. Such would reflect clear censure and nonacceptance of homosexual behavior.

Even the venue of the study is clouded, because Berryman placed on the title page of her manuscript the following: “A Thesis Prepared by M. J. Berryman for Doctor of Philosophy for the Temple Bar College, Seattle Washington” (p. 224). Quinn thinks that she “gave her study a misleading subtitle that implied she had conducted it in Seattle, rather than in Salt Lake City” (p. 196). He can find no evidence for such a college, nor even a

115 Bullough and Bullough, “Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s,” 901.
correspondence school. Vern Bullough sees the title page as showing that Berryman “hoped to use one of the fly-by-night mail-order houses to get a degree, something she very much wanted, and which she sometime[s] pretended to have” (p. 225). Quinn concludes that “Berryman used the title page to disguise the fact that Salt Lake City was the location of the homosexual community” in her study, and that it supplies “further evidence of her concern about preserving the anonymity of her lesbian and gay friends” (p. 224). But why should that be necessary, if the Latter-day Saints were tolerant of homoerotic behavior, as Quinn suggests? Quinn imagines that the “Temple Bar” reference is an allusion or “inside joke about the fact that the sexually active homosexuals of Berryman’s study were barred from the temple of the LDS Church” (p. 224). However extravagant Quinn’s suggestion may be, it is at least a tacit admission by him that Latter-day Saints did not tolerate or condone homosexual conduct, and hence it contradicts his central thesis.

It is astonishing that Quinn tries to use the Berryman study to further his own homosexual agenda. The study is plagued with problems of accuracy, veracity, and “serious bias”—as Quinn himself admits, a “bias ... so intrusive that it raises obvious (but unanswerable) questions about how representative her participants were of her community’s lesbians and gay men at the time” (p. 205). An important thing that Quinn, Berryman, and the Bulloughs all appear to agree on is that the Berryman study involved persons with a great “fear of exposure.” It was a concern possibly intensified, as the Bulloughs say, “because the community was located in [Mormon-influenced] Salt Lake City, a city not then or now as tolerant of homosexuality as the larger metropolitan cities.” Berryman “had an overwhelming fear of exposure and wanted to protect her sisters from the scrutiny of others.” This apprehension was a conspicuous thing expressed in the interviews

116 Do we have here yet another anti-Mormon attempt to bolster credibility by claiming a phony degree? This strangely recurring phenomenon has been discussed by Daniel C. Peterson in FARMS Review of Books 8/2 (1996): 89–98. John C. Bennett was involved in selling diplomas before coming to Nauvoo. See Smith, Saintly Scoundrel, 13–25, 188.

117 Bullough and Bullough, “Lesbianism in the 1920s and 1930s,” 896.

118 Ibid., 897.
Berryman conducted. Fears were made known about such things as hostile gossip, scandal, and social ostracism (pp. 220–21). As summarized by Quinn, several of those interviewed revealed that they “felt they were under the scrutiny of a homophobic society during this time period” (p. 220). Quinn recognizes that an important concern “that both lesbians and gays talked about among themselves in Salt Lake City of the early 1900s was the general fear of being ‘discovered’” (p. 220), and Berryman’s “work remained unpublished throughout her life, apparently due to her concern about possible identification of the lesbians and gay men she described” (p. 196). Why such concern? We are quite unable to grasp how Quinn’s primary notion, that Latter-day Saints in particular and Americans in general were more tolerant of homosexual conduct in the nineteenth century than now, can be squared with this fear of exposure found in Berryman’s study.

Quinn recognizes that the study “ignore[s] the obvious issues involved with sexual orientation and sexual behaviors in regard to one’s Mormon beliefs, church activity, and the expectations of LDS leaders” (p. 198). The issues that Quinn sees are the same issues that remain today. Berryman’s study is a compelling witness against Quinn’s basic thesis.

A “Coming Out” Party?

An important chapter in Quinn’s book is entitled “The Coming Out of Three Prominent Mormons in 1919” (p. 231). We will examine it in detail since Quinn discusses these persons at greater length than most, and it affords many representative examples of his technique.

Quinn uses the present homosexual expression “coming out” for self-disclosure or “coming out of the closet,” which is totally out of historical context in regard to the persons discussed. Quinn tries to forestall criticism by blurring the meaning of “coming out” through the use of his own definition—“to indicate making a public reference to one’s same-sex interests” (p. 231). This definition is so broad as to be meaningless, as are other expressions that he selects and repeats again and again to suggest homoeroticism, examples of which will follow.
Quinn claims to see a “coming out” in brief biographical sketches of Evan Stephens, a Latter-day Saint pioneer composer and conductor of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir, and of Mrs. Louie B. Felt and Mary “May” Anderson, longtime leaders in the Primary Association, which conducted the Latter-day Saint program for children. These innocent accounts were written to provide examples for the instruction of LDS youth and appeared in the Children’s Friend as lesson material in October 1919 (p. 232, 429-30). Quinn’s tendentious use of the Berryman study should alert readers to how preposterous it is to think that anyone would have a homosexual “coming out” at that place and time. He admits that “there was not even a hint of same-sex dynamics in the pre-1919 autobiographies and biographies of Stephens, Felt, and Anderson” (p. 246). Quinn, who admits to being “overwhelmed” by his own homosexual feelings,119 sees homosexual allusions in, of all places, the Children’s Friend. He seems unable to process the “warm language between friends” that was typical of the time, as he himself has noted (pp. 232, 247).120 Unfortunately, such warm language and Quinn’s disposition to uncover for his readers “hidden dimensions” result in much ungrounded speculation and essentially phony interpretations.121

Stephens, Felt, and Anderson were honorable persons who are being vilified by Quinn. If his insinuations were given credence, we would have to conclude that these people lived lives of duplicity, claiming to adhere to strict moral standards in public, but violating them in private. They would have lacked basic integrity, being insincere and unfaithful to family, friends, and church leaders. They would certainly not be the exemplary persons they are considered to have been by all who knew them. Quinn holds that Stephens, Felt, and Anderson “took a risk” (p. 246) in their supposed “coming out.” By this, Quinn admits that the community

119 See our concluding section below.
121 As discussed below, “coming out” is what Quinn did in 1996. Nothing remotely like a “coming out” is apparent in the sketches he cites. To use a children’s magazine to “come out” is a setting so improbable that it could only be compared hypothetically to Quinn’s staging his own “coming out” on Sesame Street.
of Saints did not in any way condone homosexual conduct. But this contradicts the basic thesis of his book. Why would these people have a "coming out" when at the same time Berryman's subjects did all they could to avoid exposure? Stephens, Felt, and Anderson were in sensitive positions and would have been even more at risk than the obscure persons in Berryman's study. Quinn does not attempt to reconcile this contradiction (p. 247).

Quinn alleges that "homoromantic and homoerotic subtexts" appear in these Latter-day Saint writings, and he also claims that he has "the eyes to see it or the antennae to sense it" (p. 232). Or the need to invent it. He borrows from the biographer of Amy Lowell, who claimed to discern subtexts in her writings. However, an immense difference exists between the writings of Amy Lowell, who in her time "was a well-known lesbian" (p. 172), and the writings of the Latter-day Saints who fall under Quinn's scrutiny. The contemporaries of Stephens, Felt, and Anderson have not left the least hint of any conduct contrary to the moral standards of their faith and regarded the trio as exemplary Latter-day Saints. Does Quinn's special "insight" give him license to cast suspicion on those in the past by picking words out of context and assigning a sexual meaning to them? His accounts turn out to be character assassination and distortions of the memory of the dead, who are not here to defend themselves—all as part of his attempt to further his own political agenda at their expense.

Misrepresenting the Primary Women Leaders

Louie B. Felt (1850–1928) and Mary "May" Anderson (1864–1946) were pioneer Mormon women who made a significant contribution to the foundation and development of the LDS Primary Association. The first two local Primary groups were organized in 1879, and Mrs. Felt was appointed to head the second group that same year. In 1880 she was appointed "as the first general president of the Primary Association," serving for forty-

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five years until her retirement in 1925.\textsuperscript{124} May Anderson, as she preferred to be called, was appointed secretary to the Primary General Board in 1890. She served as first counselor to Felt from 1905 until 1925 and then as general president until 1939.\textsuperscript{125} Much could be said about their good works, the praise others have given them, and their evident love of children. They began the Primary Children’s Hospital and the Children’s Friend, which Anderson edited for thirty-eight years.

Quinn would have it that in the midst of their careers they had a “coming out,” and his readers are urged to believe that they lived in the same home together in what Latter-day Saints consider grave sexual sin. No evidence exists to lead us to believe that their relationship was anything but that of true and chaste Christian friendship and sisterly love. Their conduct seems to have been pure and modest in private and in public. What Quinn sees in their expressions of love for one another is what he brings to those statements. Here we see Quinn’s bias at work, as he strives to support his agenda. Throughout Same-Sex Dynamics, Quinn imagines homosexuality in the lives of single persons.

Louie and May lived in the same home, for much of the time, from about 1889 until Felt’s death in 1928. May first came to stay there when Louie was in the midst of a long illness and at the request of Louie Felt’s husband, who needed someone to care for her while he was away on a business trip. She remained after his return to help the older woman and perform domestic service in the home. For years several others lived in the home, both adults and children. Louie and May helped care for some of the Felt children and grandchildren, and together they started a kindergarten, in addition to their service in the Primary.\textsuperscript{126} Quinn refers to them as “same-sex domestic partners” (p. 232).

Their sketches, what Quinn calls their “coming out,” were lesson materials for children. May Anderson was the editor of the Children’s Friend, and the two women merely provided information on their lives. It is all but certain that the lesson material was not autobiographical on the part of either of them, as Quinn

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{124} Ibid., 265, 272.
\item \textsuperscript{125} Ibid., 266; Encyclopedia of Mormonism (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 4:1631, 1636.
\item \textsuperscript{126} Oman, “Nurturing LDS Primaries,” 266 n. 13, 268.
\end{itemize}
would have it, but instead sketches written by Marion Belnap Kerr, who had worked with them on the Primary General Board for over five years, and was responsible for writing those lessons. Quinn quotes briefly from the lesson material, which he depicts as following:

Those who watched their devotion to each other declare that there never were more ardent lovers than these two. And strange to say during this time of love feasting, Mary changed her name to May because it seemed to be more agreeable to both (pp. 243–44).

This language is not a "self-disclosure" by anyone, but the observation of others about them during the time they were developing their friendship before they lived in the same home. We have a strong expression of the friendship and Christian love that grew between them. Had it meant anything else, it surely would not have appeared in that time and circumstance, nor would it have been authored by a third person. Quinn tries to place a sexual meaning on "ardent lovers" and "love feasting," but it would be anachronistic to do so. He should be well aware of that fact, having warned us at the outset of his book about "what historians call the 'presentist bias,'" or trying to read present meanings into the past (p. 3). As Vella Neil Evans observed in her perceptive comments on Quinn's book:

Mr. Quinn's claims regarding "love feasting" and "ardent lovers" might be challenged by his own and quite frequent recognition throughout the book, of the "warm language between friends" that was common to persons born in the nineteenth century. Victorian prose is florid, as Quinn himself admits, and many terms held less sexualized connotations in 1919 than they hold today. Both the 1913 and 1944 dictionaries I consulted defined "love feast" as a meal taken in token of brotherly love and charity. The 1913 and 1929 dictionaries had no clearly sexualized usages for "lover." Only the 1944 volume includes at the end of its listings

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127 *Children's Friend* (May 1927): 218; (January 1928): 34.
“a person with sexual passion for another” and “a paramour.” 129

The simple use of the nickname “May” for Mary Anderson is for Quinn evidence that, in “establishing their new relationship, the younger woman publicly took a different name, as would a new bride, rather than adopting a private nickname between close friends” (p. 244). Quinn ignores the facts that Mrs. Felt suggested the nickname to avoid confusion with another friend and church worker130 and that “May” was then a common nickname for “Mary.”131 Quinn also mistakenly claims that the children’s lesson “added that the two women shared the same bed” (p. 244). In fact, the lesson “added” nothing of the sort. Quinn’s claim is true neither to the text nor the context of these sketches. The article spoke of the long hours the two women sometimes devoted to Primary work after their daytime employment, saying that “when they were too tired to sit up any longer they put on their bathrobes and crawled into bed to work until the wee small hours of the night” (p. 244).132 Quinn believes that “it is difficult to overlook the erotic dimension of that acknowledgment” (p. 244). Difficult for him, but not for those not inclined to hunt for any signs of a homosexual disclosure. The language Quinn quotes says nothing whatsoever about sleeping arrangements.133 Could it not have been that the ladies “crawled into” their own beds?

Quinn wants his readers to think that Louie Felt was estranged from her husband, Joseph H. Felt (p. 233). But the evidence points only to a normal heterosexual family life. Joseph and Louie met and fell in love during their journey to Utah. After their marriage they were sent to colonize at the “Muddy” in

129 Vella Neil Evans, Women’s Studies, University of Utah, at the Sunstone Symposium, Salt Lake City, 16 August 1996. Audio Tape No. 238.
130 Carol Cornwall Madsen and Susan Staker Oman, Sisters and Little Saints: One Hundred Years of Primary (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 35.
133 Vella Neil Evans’s comment is apt here: “Most contemporary Mormon women—or non-Mormon women—would overlook the erotic in that scene.” Sunstone Symposium, 1996, Audio Tape No. 238.
Nevada under severe conditions, after which they returned to Salt Lake City. During their marriage, Joseph was twice called away on LDS missions. Louie Felt experienced the disappointment of not being able to bear children. Her husband took two plural wives, both of whom were able to have children, and Louie helped raise them. They were a harmonious family. During the government campaign against polygamy, Joseph Felt went on the "underground" for extensive periods, and Louie twice traveled East to avoid testifying against her husband. Through all this she was faithful to her husband.

Quinn claims the Felts lived apart after May Anderson began staying at the home, but again offers no evidence that would support his assertion (p. 233). It is true that Joseph Felt had two homes because of his plural marriages. Quinn's attempt to use city directories here is futile, not only because they are incomplete, but because sensitivity about plural marriage at this time, right after the Manifesto, caused people to obscure their living arrangements. This explains the limited information about his family in Joseph Felt's obituary. Quinn does nothing to inform his readers of the fact that Joseph Felt died in 1907, leaving Louie a widow for twenty-one years. With his usual insinuation and innuendo, he refers to Felt and Anderson as having a "live-in relationship" (p. 233), or of Anderson being Felt's "live-in companion" (p. 243), reflecting post-1960s jargon referring to persons living together in an erotic relationship out of wedlock.

What was the contemporary understanding of the marriage of Joseph and Louie Felt? Joseph was described as "a tender, thoughtful, loving and devoted husband." In the outline for the presentation of the lesson on Louie Felt, the stated purpose is to show that "the true way to serve the Master, is to serve one's fellow men," and she is held out as an example of that, including her faithfulness as "a model wife and . . . mother to her hus-

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135 Ibid.
137 Adelaide U. Hardy, "Living for a Purpose," Children’s Friend (December 1918): 476. Hardy was Librarian for the Primary Association.
band’s children.” If Quinn’s interpretation of the brief passage with the “warm language” were true, the writer of the lesson contradicted herself, and included ideas entirely incompatible with the lesson purpose and objective. Marion Belnap Kerr, the person who probably wrote the lesson and who served as historian for the Primary Association, was later to give a tribute at Mrs. Felt’s funeral:

As a woman, Sister Felt was beautiful, cultured, modest, warmly sympathetic, magnetic, fun-loving, companionable, deeply spiritual and possessed an extraordinary love for little children.

As a wife, she was devoted to her husband and to his children. She was a good house-keeper, a real home-maker. Her devotion to her husband was the kind that helped him to stand by his ideals of right.

With the children’s lesson, a photograph of Mrs. Felt and May Anderson appeared, bearing the caption: “The ‘David and Jonathan’ of the General Board” (p. 242). Quinn says that homosexual activist “Rocky O’Donovan regards that as a virtual announcement that Felt and Anderson were lesbians,” thereby sidestepping the responsibility for saying it himself (p. 242). O’Donovan imagines that “for centuries David and Jonathan had signified male-male desire and eroticism.” Signified to whom? Quinn has already affirmed that “most Bible readers and

138 Children’s Friend (October 1919): 416. See the similar description in Andrew Jenson, Latter-day Saint Biographical Encyclopedia (Salt Lake City: Andrew Jenson Memorial Association, 1901–36), 4:283. Compare the comments on this lesson by Adelaide U. Hardy: “The Lord God said, ‘It is not good that man should be alone: I will make him an help meet for him,’ so He created woman, and the apostle Paul says, ‘Woman is the glory of man.’” She then sees Mrs. Felt as meeting that ideal: “How beautifully the life of our beloved President, Louie B. Felt, expresses that woman is the glory of man, and forcefully teaches ‘The true way to serve the Master is to serve one’s fellow men.’” Children’s Friend (December 1919): 492.


140 Children’s Friend (October 1919): 421.

scholars" would not place an erotic interpretation on the relationship of David and Jonathan (pp. 113, 114). Quinn dodges the question of what is meant in a 1919 Primary lesson in the *Children's Friend*. For Latter-day Saints, references to David and Jonathan seem to have had no homosexual connotations. Why? Latter-day Saints have always considered the relationship of David and Jonathan as a prime example of Christian love applying to brothers and sisters in the gospel—the true and chaste love so well described as we noted earlier from George Q. Cannon and Brigham Young. Elsewhere in his book, Quinn concedes that such chaste love exists and that it is very much more prevalent than are homosexual relationships (pp. 1, 69, 85, 89, 92, 93, 96, 109, 113, 114, 231, 247, 401). Quinn uses non-Mormon secular language, calling nonsexual affection "Platonic love," or "same-sex intimacy without homoeroticism" (pp. 451, 468, 471).

What Quinn is really describing is heterosexual (same-gender) friendship devoid of any erotic behavior. His use of the words "same-sex intimacy" misrepresents the texture and tone of the friendship between Felt and Anderson. Whatever Quinn's problem with language, it is clear that the lives of Louie Felt and May Anderson will continue to provide worthy examples of Christian love and service, not only for children in 1919, but for all Latter-day Saints.

**Evan Stephens as a "Case Study"**

Quinn claims that "the life of Evan Stephens, director of the Mormon Tabernacle Choir at the turn of the twentieth century, provides a case study in the use of social history sources, as well as being a prime example of the early Mormon celebration of male-male intimacy."142 Quinn’s treatment of Stephens provides a case study of a tendentious historical method—of Quinn’s misuse of sources, his mistakes, and of insinuation and innuendo to evoke a "celebration" that occurred only in his imagination.

Evan Stephens has always been held in the highest esteem and affection by the Saints and in high regard by those outside the church who knew him and his work. The tenth child of a Welsh convert family, Stephens walked the plains in 1866 at the age of

142 Quinn, "Male-Male Intimacy," 110.
twelve. His family settled in the village of Willard, near Brigham City, Utah. Evan soon showed a great interest and aptitude for music and became a major musical force in northern Utah. In 1882, at age 28, Stephens moved to Salt Lake City to study and to teach music, and to supervise personnel of the Tabernacle Choir, and there he accepted a call to work with the education of the youth for the General Sunday School. This began what was essentially his lifelong mission, which was to build faith in God, Jesus Christ, and the restored gospel among LDS youth. It came at a time when the secularization of Utah’s schools was seen by Latter-day Saints as an attempt by the non-Mormon world to separate the youth from their faith. Stephens was called to help prevent that, and he was most effective in building faith and standing as an example for both youth and adults.  

Evan Stephens attended the University of Deseret and later taught there, at the University of Utah, and at the Latter-day Saints’ University. He was active in teaching, composition, and in organizing and conducting concerts, children’s and youth choirs, glee clubs, and operatic productions. Stephens also studied for a year at the New England Conservatory in Boston. The context of Stephens’s life is not just that of musician, composer, poet, and dramatist, but that of educator, both within and without the church. This key aspect of Stephens’s work, although neglected by Quinn, is important in helping us understand Stephens. In addition to his university teaching, Stephens also taught in the Salt Lake City schools and was the first public school supervisor of music in Utah. Appointed director of the Salt Lake Tabernacle Choir in 1890, he served in that capacity for twenty-six years until his retirement in 1916. Under his direction the choir made several concert tours and received many honors. Stephens composed hundreds of hymns, songs, anthems, poems, and choral works; he was instrumental in laying a solid foundation for LDS music and hymns and for improving music at all levels of the church. Known

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for his piety, Evan Stephens worked to establish respect for the restored gospel among non-Mormons in the years prior to and in the decades after statehood. His lyrics and poems stressed the celebration of Zion, loyalty to God, country, his church, friends, and the atonement of Jesus Christ. Many were the special concerts and testimonial programs conducted in his honor. Perhaps the most famous hymn composed by Stephens reads as follows:

Shall the youth of Zion falter
In defending truth and right?
While the enemy assaileth,
Shall we shrink or shun the fight? No!

While we know the pow'rs of darkness
Seek to thwart the work of God,
Shall the children of the promise
Cease to grasp the iron rod? No!

We will work out our salvation;
We will cleave unto the truth;
We will watch and pray and labor
With the fervent zeal of youth. Yes!

We will strive to be found worthy
Of the kingdom of our Lord,
With the faithful ones redeemed
Who have loved and kept his word. Yes!

Refrain:
True to the faith that out parents have cherished,
True to the truth for which martyrs have perished,
To God's command, Soul, heart, and hand,
Faithful and true we will ever stand.

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We have found many statements of praise, deep respect, and appreciation from church leaders, friends, and associates of Evan Stephens. Not one of them has left a hint that there was anything of “male-male intimacy” that involved an erotic dimension in his life, as Quinn insinuates. Instead, Stephens is known only as a strictly moral Christian gentleman. Quinn ignores all these sources. We have found no indication that Quinn made an effort to interview any of those who remembered Stephens and were acquainted with his personality and lifestyle; some of these individuals have retained letters, a photojournal belonging to Stephens, and photographs or other documents touching on the Welshman’s life. We assume that Quinn was either careless in his research or suspected such sources would not support his premise. When faulted in the press for ignoring such evidence, Quinn responded that sources on Stephens were “publicly unavailable.” However, the decision of whether a source will be made available should not have been made by Quinn, but by the persons who own the documents. It appears that Quinn did not attempt to gain access to important Stephens documents. Stephens’s family, relatives, and friends cited in Ray Bergman’s book on Evan Stephens, many of whom are on record at the LDS Family History Library as having submitted family information, were not contacted by Quinn. Historians are frequently involved in locating documents which at a given time appear to be “publicly unavailable.” The historian should not consider textual evidences


149 For a recent biography see Bergman, The Children Sang. We rely on this source for many details of Stephens’s life. So does Quinn, but he fails to give Bergman’s work near the credit it deserves in helping him locate sources and documents. Bergman’s book certainly made Quinn aware that he was ignoring many important sources.
“publicly unavailable” when he has not tried to access these documents.

Many notes in Quinn’s book show his use of the LDS Family History Library, but he did not use that resource to locate family members who might provide information. As in other essays by Quinn, his biases prevent a full inquiry, as he strives for a bizarre history. Quinn’s bias seems to have led him to avoid or ignore a large number of relevant historical documents and persons who could have provided information. We will use sources avoided by Quinn in order to indicate some of the flaws in his treatment of Evan Stephens. However, we are not dependent on these sources for our case against Quinn’s treatment of Stephens. The flaws are obvious in sources that he did use and which were “publicly available” to him.

Ray Bergman, a member of one of Stephens’s youth choirs, has written a biography of Stephens. Based on his research with Stephens family members and others who knew him, Bergman concluded that Stephens was heterosexual and that the speculations Quinn has made “besmirch the reputation of an honorable man.” After our own examination of the evidence, we agree with Bergman. Quinn’s errors and contradictions seem to originate from his determination to force Stephens to fit his own political and social agenda.

The Question of Marriage

Quinn claims that the “tightly knit Mormon community at church headquarters knew that Evan Stephens never married”


(p. 233). This is obviously true. Quinn reports the obvious in an attempt to suggest that it was not a matter of concern for the Brethren. Given Mormon teachings on marriage, single status certainly would be a matter of concern to those who knew Stephens. Undoubtedly, like many single persons in the Latter-day Saint community—even today—Stephens was asked about his unmarried status, but felt that such questions were in poor taste. Like many unmarried LDS adults, Stephens sometimes used humor to deflect such questions from family members and close friends, and on occasion he gave a stern rebuke to those who presumed to think him unconcerned about marriage. The Welshman endured some gentle and kindly teasing at times, as is apparent in the following remark by President Joseph F. Smith at the Latter-day Saint general conference in April 1908:

God bless our choir. May God bless Brother Evan Stephens, a man full of the love of truth, full of the spirit of song, devoted to the cause of Zion, a man who is wedded to his profession and his work, striving for the uplifting of the children of Zion. May the Lord bless him for it, and I hope by and by, when he gets old

152 Bergman, Children Sang. 188. George L. Mitton, in a letter to the editor, Dialogue 29/4 (1996): vi, has reported the recollection expressed to him by Samuel B. Mitton, who asked Stephens about his marriage plans several times, but “he always avoided the question with a witty response.” We note in passing that according to Quinn’s unsupported same-gender theory, we are expected to believe Mitton was one of Stephens’s “boy chums,” and should not have found it necessary to ask. Further, as reported by Jane Stephens James, a niece of Evan Stephens, “Everyone knew that Evan’s sweetheart had died, and that Evan and his housekeeper Sarah were looking to marriage, but that things were not working out because Sarah would not join the church. To bring the matter up would bring Evan pain, and no one wanted to do that. Evan was always kind and understanding to others. To do so would have been wrong. Evan indulged his close friends who asked about his marriage to Sarah with gentle humor, but there were rude ones who demonstrated few manners and little sensitivity to Evan’s feelings. He wanted to be married and have children in the worst way.” Jane Stephens James, interviewed by Rhett S. James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
enough he will grow large enough to get wedded to a
good wife as well as to music.\textsuperscript{153}

President Smith’s counsel to Evan Stephens certainly cannot be
interpreted as a lack of concern that Stephens was unwed and most
certainly does not reflect any recognition of homosexual proclivi­
ties in Stephens. And Quinn has himself shown President Smith’s
lack of toleration for homosexual behavior (p. 276).

Quinn’s speculation that Stephens lacked interest in marriage
has no documentary, oral, or traditional support. In Bergman’s
biography of Stephens the question of marriage is discussed at
length,\textsuperscript{154} but Quinn does not convey that to his readers. He
merely mentions one of Bergman’s points in an endnote, dis­
missing it without adequate cause (p. 250 n. 9). Readers are likely
to assume that Quinn’s is the only explanation for Stephens’s sin­
gle life, but this is far from the truth.

Bergman reviews evidence that Stephens “enjoyed the enthu­
siastic companionship of both boys and girls”\textsuperscript{155} and that he
used to date young women in his youth, and dated women later in
life.\textsuperscript{156} Quinn avoids mention of most of Stephens’s young
friends, merely citing Bergman’s generalizations.

Of great importance is the deep disappointment and “early­life tragedy” that Stephens avoided discussing and never clarified,”
and which has emerged in several sources, no one of which
“completely reveals his reasons for never marrying.”\textsuperscript{157} Bergman recounts two instances where a young woman in whom
Stephens had much interest married another man. Even more
traumatic were the untimely deaths of two other women, in each

\textsuperscript{153} \textit{Conference Report} (April 1908): 123. A delightful response by Evan
has been preserved in Stephens family tradition, reporting that the congregation
chuckled at Pres. Smith’s comments, and Stephens “stood and waved... a broad
smile on his face” saying “I’m trying to repent,” alluding to his courtship of
Sarah Daniels, which delighted everyone. The tradition is discussed by Rhett S.
James, “Making of a Folk Hero...,” in \textit{Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen}, 17 July
1997), 10.

\textsuperscript{154} Bergman, \textit{Children Sang}, 179–89.

\textsuperscript{155} Ibid., 183.

\textsuperscript{156} Ibid., 182–84; see James in \textit{Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen}, 17 July

\textsuperscript{157} Bergman, \textit{Children Sang}, 183, emphasis added.
case leaving him in deep grief. The cumulative effect on Stephens must be given at least some weight.

Information about the first young woman comes from a recollection of Stephens’s courtship and engagement recorded by Ruth Johnson, who taught English at Bear River High School for forty-two years. During that time she collected accounts of early pioneer experiences and they were privately printed in 1973.\(^{158}\) The account comes from her notes of an interview she conducted with an elderly pioneer woman named Helen Leonard at the time of Stephens’s death in 1930. Leonard remembered the circumstances of Evan Stephens meeting his intended wife, their joyful courtship, engagement and intense love, and of the death of the fiancée after a brief illness. She described Stephens coming into their home and “amid broken sobs” telling them of her death, and of her deathbed request to him which was, in substance, “If I am not here any more, give all your time to music. Love me through your music.”\(^{159}\) This recollection is in agreement with the Stephens family oral tradition and continues to be repeated by family and friends who actually knew Evan Stephens.\(^{160}\)

Quinn ignores another source. An incident occurred at Willard, Utah, and is mentioned by George D. Pyper (1860–1943), prominent Latter-day Saint leader and musician, who was for forty

\(^{158}\) Ruth Johnson, *Patchwork: Early Pioneer, Indian, and Faith Promoting Latter-day Saint Stories* ([Logan, Utah]: Marion J. Gilmore and Helen J. Barton, 1973). Quinn alludes to this account only in an endnote, but dismisses it because Stephens would “have been only fourteen” when engaged (p. 250 n. 9). But the recollected dates are approximate, and Bergman estimates they were planning to be married in 1871 or 1872 when Stephens was older, and could provide for his wife. Bergman, *Children Sang*, 186. Research of Stephens family traditions by Rhett S. James and Betty Hammond, after Bergman’s book was published, recounts that this incident of Stephens’s engagement and the death of the young woman happened while Stephens was living with Alexander Lewis and his family at Logan, Utah, which would put Stephens in his twenties. Interviews by Rhett S. James with Jane Stephens James, Malad, Idaho, 22 July 1955; Lydia Stephens Merrill, Ogden, Utah, 24 July 1958; Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996 and 30 December 1996; Maude Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 2 June 1996.


\(^{160}\) See Stephens family interviews as cited above.
years a close friend of Evan Stephens. Pyper wrote and published this account seven years before Stephens’s death:

The charm of his early days at Willard has never been dispelled and there are very few peaks or nooks in those hills that cannot show his footprints. Twas here he first developed his musical genius and twas here his first compositions were written. But with the charm of that life was also associated the memory of one of his deepest sorrows, experienced in the death of a dear young friend caused by an accident which occurred while the young people of the town were rehearsing a play.

Further details are offered by Bergman, based on the report of a descendent of a pioneer Willard family. It explains that Evan Stephens was infatuated with a young lady member of the dramatic company. In the course of a melodrama in rehearsal, the villain of the play was supposed to shoot the heroine, played by the close friend of Stephens. The cast member playing the villain pulled the trigger on the gun being used as a prop in the action, and a live shell still in the chamber by mistake was discharged, killing the girl.

These events may have taken their toll on Stephens and affected his feelings about marriage. Consider the following, also from George D. Pyper:

Professor Stephens never married, but I’m not so sure that his heart was always free. His home ... was a

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161 George D. Pyper was general superintendent of the Sunday Schools, and a member of the Church Music Committee on which Stephens also served. On his close association with Stephens, see his *Stories of Latter-day Saint Hymns: Their Authors and Composers* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1939), 61.
rendezvous for lovers [young men and women courting]. There he provided nooks and crannies for their wooing.\textsuperscript{164}

He also was a natural poet. At the time of his death I [Pyper] came into possession of a brief diary that was published in "The Instructor" [in] December, 1930, [and] January, February and March 1931. Among his papers the following lines were found indicating something of a lost love.

Seek to forget, O heart of mine,
Things that I dearly cherished,
Lest I offend God's present love,
Brooding on what has perished.

Seek to forget the Zion lost,
With many a cherished treasure,
Lest I the Zion God will give,
Fail to embrace with pleasure.

Look thou before, O soul of mine,
Cast not behind thy glances\textsuperscript{165}
That yet to be and not the past
Ever the soul entrances.

Mourn not the seed cast in the earth,\textsuperscript{166}
Look to the time of reaping;
Glorious the harvest thou may'st reap
Sown in the days of weeping.\textsuperscript{167}

\textsuperscript{164} Stephens's photojournal records his and Sarah Daniels's chaperoning the young men and women visiting his home. Photographic copy in possession of Rhett S. James, Logan, Utah.

\textsuperscript{165} Compare Luke 9:62.

\textsuperscript{166} A death and resurrection motif. See John 10:17-18; 12:24-25; 1 Corinthians 15:35-38, 42-44.

\textsuperscript{167} George D. Pyper, "Hymn of the Month by Stephens: George Pyper Reviews Work of Evan Stephens," Deseret News, 23 August 1941, sec. 2, p. 8, emphasis added. Pyper elsewhere claims that these lines evidence that "the dear Professor had some disappointment in his life which he sought to forget." George D. Pyper, Instructor (April 1931): 199.
Pyper’s judgment that these verses reflect Stephens’s feelings of “a lost love” must be taken into account precisely because of his close association with Stephens. This sense of loss was often accompanied by a feeling of loneliness, despite his many friends, and when Stephens was away from home he often felt homesick and would return sooner than he had intended.168 Stephens may have been wrestling with what in his native Wales would be called hiraeth:

Having no precise English translation, . . . it refers to the pain felt by someone when separated from a beloved person, place, or time . . . [or] things one has had in the past and has since lost . . . it is considered a good thing to feel, mainly because it indicates a strong emotional attachment . . . felt to be appropriate and desirable.169

According to a Stephens family oral tradition the above poem recounts Stephens’s feelings for his dead betrothed, his later failure to convert and marry Sarah Daniels, his grieving over not having children of his own, his hope of a future marriage after death, and his belief that God knew his heart and would provide him wife and children in eternity.170

A very strong tradition in the Stephens family explains that Evan was deeply concerned about his unmarried status, but never found what he considered an appropriate opportunity for marriage with someone for whom he felt the same intense love he had

168  “Prof. Stephens has improved every hour in a musical way since coming here and will soon be ready to leave for home. The call of the mountains is strong upon him, and his many friends here will regretfully say good bye.” “Salt Lakers in Gotham,” Deseret Evening News, 25 November 1916, sec. 2, p. 3. Note the comment of friend J. Golden Kimball: “I know as well as I know anything that the Lord will bless Brother Evan Stephens; and as a servant of the Lord, I promise him he shall have the Holy Spirit to comfort and console him, and he shall not be lonely or desolate among this people.” Conference Report (April 1918): 134.


170  Rhett S. James, interview with David James and Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
known in his youth. 171 Without that feeling he was reluctant to marry. Throughout Stephens’s life he apparently felt “under promise” 172 to his lost love, although given the Latter-day Saint belief in the possibility of plural marriage in the afterlife, this did not necessarily preclude marriage to another person in mortality. Judge Thomas Stephens, Evan’s brother, recalled him saying that “More than breath, I desire marriage” and “My heart is sad for my beloved.” 173 To Thomas he also explained: “I want sons and daughters, but for the time being I have music; and my students are become my sons and daughters.” 174 This would appear to be his substitution for a normal family relationship, and his attempt to experience something similar, with the opportunity to help and serve the young men and women he befriended much like he would have wanted to do with children of his own. Indeed, Stephens was known to refer to the youth in his home as “the ‘children’ here.” 175

Quinn’s discussion of Stephens also suffers from a failure to consider the Welsh background and culture that influenced him, as well as his manner of expression. Grieving to death and celibacy are not uncommon among the traditional Welsh, who culturally learn an intense loyalty and connection to loved ones. 176

Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels (Quinn’s Nemesis)

Quinn’s nemesis in his treatment of Evan Stephens is an attractive Welsh lady, Sarah Daniels, who served as the housekeeper in Evan Stephens’s home for twenty-eight years until he died in 1930. 177 In accordance with the provisions of Stephens’s will, Sarah continued to live there after his death. We believe that in

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171 James, Utah Statehood 1896, 59–60.
172 Bergman, Children Sang, 186, quoting letter of Stephens to Samuel B. Mitton, 17 March 1922.
173 Rhett S. James, interview with Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955.
174 Ibid.
175 Evan Stephens to Samuel B. Mitton, 19 December 1920. Photocopy in our possession.
176 For a discussion and sources, see Rhett S. James, “Guest Commentary,” Logan (Utah) Herald Journal, 10 March 1996, 1.
177 On Sarah Daniels, see Bergman, Children Sang, 179–82, 188–89.
trying to understand Stephens, it is imperative to seek an understanding of Sarah Daniels. Quinn has failed to do that, giving Sarah only the briefest mention (pp. 237, 238, 254 n. 47, 255 n. 51). He makes no attempt to consider either her significance in Stephens’s life or that of any of the women important to him.

Relatives who knew Evan Stephens—some of whom were interviewed in 1996—remember that he was determined to marry a Welsh-speaking girl and traveled to his birthplace—Pencader, Wales—to find a wife. It is believed he there met Congregationalist Sarah Daniels during his 1900 trip to Wales and Europe. Sarah conducted a children’s choir and played the organ. With appropriate chaperons, Evan and Sarah dated. Willard Christopherson, a young man on his way to an LDS mission, accompanied Stephens as a chaperon, as did the local minister in Wales. In 1953 Rachel Davies of Pencader, a relative who knew both Evan and Sarah, wrote to her “Cousin Mabel” Jones in St. John, Idaho, remembering how “Evan Stephens came over to this country to fetch” Sarah.

After Stephens returned to Utah, he corresponded in Welsh with Sarah Daniels for about two years. He then made arrangements for her to come to Utah in 1902, and she stayed in Evan Stephens’s home, chaperoned by male and female relatives and neighbors. On her arrival in Utah, Sarah did not join the church as Evan expected. Family tradition recounts that Evan felt he could not marry Sarah until she accepted the gospel. Intensely loyal to Sarah, Evan did not send her back to Wales. To do so would have shamed her in her village and closed the door to future positive relationships between Evan and his hometown, where he was held in high esteem. Willing to be patient with each other, Evan and Sarah agreed that Sarah would be his housekeeper. Evan employed her and paid her a wage that she might have independence of action. He then arranged for students (most often male and

178 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 118.
female relatives) to board in his home to create a chaperoned atmosphere. In the years that followed, Evan and Sarah dated, held lively theological discussions, had opportunities to marry others, but remained loyal and true to each other.

Evan Stephens's home was sufficiently large to accommodate several persons. Indeed it probably reflected his desire for and anticipation of a family. Obviously, the new living arrangement for the home was a continuation of the strict Welsh custom of chaperonage that would have been seen as necessary, not only by Sarah, but also by Evan—one that would also be appropriate in the moral environment of the Latter-day Saints. The community, having a knowledge of Stephens's character and personality, must have found his arrangement an acceptable assurance of propriety, for many people visited or stayed in the home, and we have found no intimation of any contrary opinion. Nor has Quinn any such evidence. Interviews with Maud Thomas and Melba Jones, who stayed in Evan Stephens's home as girls, confirm the family traditions, and that Stephens was very strict in his living arrangements. When boys and girls were in the home, Sarah and the young ladies stayed upstairs. Evan had his own room off by himself. The boys stayed in the other end of the house, separated from Evan and the women.181

Of particular interest is a Stephens family photograph that well illustrates the provision for chaperonage in the lives of Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels. Probably taken in 1907, it shows Evan Stephens, seated, with Sarah Daniels standing behind and to the side, and Noel S. Pratt standing behind Stephens. Pratt was a young man who had boarded in Stephens's home as a student. The photograph was a Christmas gift to Henry and Catherine Jones of Malad, Idaho. The provision for chaperonage provided a proper presentation for Sarah and Evan, who were not married. Sarah Daniels is standing next to Pratt, not seated by Stephens. During a visit to Wales in 1907, Sarah took a photograph of "Stephens & Friend Noel S. Pratt at the old [Stephens's] home

181 Betty Hammond of Logan, Utah, interviews with Maud Thomas and Mabel Jones, Malad, Idaho, 20 April 1996 and 4 June 1996; and with Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho 3 May 1996.
spot South Wales, 1907,”182 and Pratt took a photograph of Evan and Sarah. The Christmas photograph shows the three at approximately the same age as in the photographs taken in Wales. It may be that the gift photograph was taken in Wales also, or in connection with that trip when Pratt accompanied Evan and Sarah as chaperon. The 1907 trip was to Stephens’s birthplace, which was also the birthplace of Henry Jones and Sarah Daniels. The Pratt family were close friends of Stephens and were known to his relatives in Idaho.

Sarah Daniels stands in the photograph as an unmistakable bulwark against Quinn’s gossip and speculation. Faced with this fact, Quinn apparently decided to leave Sarah Daniels “out of the picture” as much as possible. Not only did he scarcely mention her in his book, but, without permission of the owner, he had the Stephens family photograph copied from Bergman’s biography,183 and then had it cropped to exclude Sarah Daniels, thereby distorting the context and meaning of the photograph. Quinn then had the Utah State Historical Society forward the “doctored” photograph to the University of Illinois Press without informing the Press it had been cropped.184 Press Director Richard Wentworth claimed that the University of Illinois Press personnel did not know the Stephens photograph had been altered, although the Bergman book was available to them.185 The resulting photograph showed only the two men together and was then prepared to be used as an illustration in Quinn’s book and on the dust jacket—as a bit of “visual innuendo.”

Don Noble, copyright owner of the photograph and a member of the Stephens family, asked that his photograph not be used. As the family saw it, the Stephens family heirloom was to be pub-

182 Stephens photojournal. Several other photographs illustrate this principle, often including one or two couples—sometimes three—along with Evan and Sarah.
183 Bergman, Children Sang, 180. The photograph appeared here in its unaltered form and with the permission of Don Noble, owner of the copyright. It is not to be reproduced, in whole or in part, without express permission.
185 Richard L. Wentworth to Rhett S. James, 4 and 11 June, 16 July 1996.
lished by the University of Illinois Press to help Quinn vilify a beloved relative and friend, and its intended use was especially offensive in the altered form. Initially Richard Wentworth refused to comply, but on review of the matter the University of Illinois ultimately decided against the use of the altered photograph and informed Mr. Noble that it had “decided to remove the photograph before publication. The Press agrees that the cropping of the image of Sarah Daniels from the photograph might call into question the photograph’s historical accuracy in the context of the book.”186 This required the University of Illinois Press to reprint the dust jacket and “razor out” the deceptive page from five thousand copies of the book before it was offered to the public. The photograph was then withdrawn.187

The devout Congregationalist Sarah had decided not to become a Latter-day Saint, and the devout Latter-day Saint Stephens refused to marry out of his faith. This resulted in a “good-natured antagonism,” according to Bergman, and they “would spend hours debating about religion, sometimes by the kitchen window within earshot of the neighbors or of the frequent house guests at Pine Lodge [Stephens’s home]—Evan’s ‘Boys’ or his sister or aunt who sometimes stayed there.”188 Family tradition recounts that Evan often told his family in effect that “she would make a dear wife, but I will marry only in the faith.”189 But after Evan Stephens died, Sarah converted and joined the Church of

186 Letter of Marcia A. Rotunda, Associate University Counsel, University of Illinois, to Jay W. Mitton, attorney for Don Noble, 12 July 1996. Copy in our possession.
187 The cropped photograph has been used in some advertising of the University of Illinois Press. See Lingua Franca 6 (July—August 1996): 22; Mormon History Association Annual Meeting [program], 1996. 25; University of Illinois Press, Illinois 1997 Spring/Summer Books & Journals [catalog], 34. A photograph of the original dust jacket with the “doctored” photograph was reproduced, again apparently without permission, in “Quinn and Controversial Book Come ‘Out,’” Sunstone 19/4 (December 1996): 73.
188 Bergman, Children Sang, 182.
189 Rhett S. James, interviews with David James and Jane Stephens James, St. John, Idaho, 22 July 1955; Lydia Stephens Merrill, Ogden, Utah, 24 July 1958; Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996; Maud Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 4 June 1996.
Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and became an active and dedicated member.

Sarah was very lonely without Evan. Her feelings were like those of a widow. In a letter to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mitton, who were friends of both of them for many years, she wrote: “I miss Stephens so much. I called on him Sunday [i.e., visited his grave], took a little pink posey up. Dr. Christopherson drove up, he waded through a foot and a half of snow to put the posey . . . on the grave.” She mentioned she had “had three nice books from Pres. [Heber J.] Grant, and several fine letters” from him to comfort her, adding that “I am lonesome[,] thirty years is a long time to live in the same house with anyone. The one goes [and] the other one is like the last verse of ‘The last rose of Summer.’” Sarah’s allusion to this very familiar song is significant, being an effective way to express how she felt. The verse reads: “So soon may I follow, / When friendships decay; / And from Love’s shining circle / The gems drop away. / When true hearts lie wither’d, / And fond ones are flown, / Oh! who would inhabit / This bleak world alone?”

In another remarkable letter to the Mittons, Sarah Daniels wrote the following a little more than a year after Stephens’s death:

Now you will be more surprised than ever. I was “Sealed” to Stephens for “Time and all Eternity[”] in the Salt Lake Temple . . . Nov. 5th 1931. To explain this:- Months ago a lady widow came to see me to have my permission that she would be “Sealed” to Stephens. I could not do anything. So I went to some one who could “do” or “not do.” I saw President [Charles W.] Nibley among others, he said, you

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190 Sarah Daniels to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mitton, 29 January 1931, photocopy in our possession. Spelling as in original. The “Dr. Christopherson” is Willard Christopherson, who served as chaperon in 1900 when Stephens visited Sarah Daniels in Wales.

191 Ibid.


193 Married by proxy for the afterlife, subject to agreement of the deceased.
are the one to have that privilege [sic]. I before then put it up to the Temple authorities. It could not and would not be done without her prove that he had given his permission. . . . Now if Care and all I have done and seen to since I have been here, after death also, has any reward, I have earned it. And I am not ashamed of what I have done. Stephens and I lived clean lives in this home; we have living Witness above. After all this, I of course did not know if this priviledge would be granted me either, So I found out I could have permission from the Temple, but I would not take that, I had to have it from Pres. [Heber J.] Grant as head of the Church also as Stephens’ personal friend. So last Wednesday about 3 p. m. he said the word. . . . I was sure that I had it from the right source.

Bishop Christensen just came to the gate, he said, you are going to be “Sealed” to Stephens today. . . . I just had a letter from Pres. Grant authorizing it to be done. The man who Baptized me194 stood for Stephens. . . . Mr. Card [was] one witness [I] did not know the other man. Bishop Christensen read the service. The two men kissed me, and hugged me, and we all cried . . .

This witness Mr. Card shook my hand as I came out. Said [a] lot of nice things. I said, Suppose Stephens will put on his hat and leave me, He said, I sure would be glad to have you. . . . I remained Single to be here with him, had a good chance to marry a wealthy man, but the Church stood between us and Stephens too. Now, I also refused a good home to be with Stephens, So I feel that I deserve it. . . . My health is fair but [I am] lonely.195

Much is to be learned from these letters. Sarah loved Evan Stephens and perceived that he loved her and was sufficiently interested in marriage to be willing to marry her, were she to be

194 That is, at the time she joined the church.
195 Sarah Daniels to Mr. and Mrs. Samuel B. Mitton, circa 11 November 1931, spelling and punctuation as in original. Photocopy in our possession.
converted. She expressed genuine faith in the gospel she had embraced, and in the afterlife and a continued association with others. She respected and supported the Brethren. Her statement that “Stephens and I lived clean lives in this home; we have living Witness above,” becomes her solemn oath because she calls on God to be the witness of their chastity. This is her affirmation about the moral quality of the home, not only as it related to Evan and herself, but in their relationships to others who lived there. Sarah’s expression also underlines the concern felt by some members of the Stephens family and others that a bachelor and spinster were living in the same house.196 The First Presidency, knowing Evan and Sarah well, saw each of them as morally chaste and worthy to be married for eternity. The assurance of such worthiness would have been necessary for them to be placed under sacred temple vows; Sarah would have been carefully interviewed about such worthiness before being authorized to go to the temple. In writing to long-standing friends she expected that they would have the same opinion of their worthiness and of the marriage being appropriate, as indeed they did.197

Having lived in the Stephens home as his housekeeper for twenty-eight years, Sarah Daniels would have known Evan Stephens better than any other person. If there were anything irregular in his life and home, she would have been the first to sense it, and because of her love, been deeply offended. Sarah knew Evan as morally clean and worthy in every way and felt he would be willing to accept her as a marriage partner once she understood and shared his religious beliefs. Sarah Daniels is a powerful witness against Quinn’s thesis.

**Stephens, Quinn, and the Rubáiyát**

A centerpiece in Quinn’s portrayal of Evan Stephens is his use of a verse that he mistakenly claims is his “same-sex love song”

196 James’s interviews cited above.
197 A daughter of the Mittons remembers that her parents “agreed that the sealing was the right thing to do and they were very happy about the sealing. They always wondered why Evan Stephens and Sarah Daniels did not get married and thought they would have been good marriage partners.” Mary Mitton Kennedy, interviewed by George L. Mitton, Salt Lake City, 17 June 1997.
(pp. 72, 241–42). The verse appeared in an account of a program honoring Evan Stephens and his music at the Latter-day Saints' University in 1902. Before discussing the verse, we need to understand the setting in which it appeared. In two passages filled with false assertions, Quinn says that

Stephens announced a same-sex love song to an assembly . . . in which Stephens invited his unnamed "friend" to "conspire" and rebel against "the established order," which made it difficult to "love if we dared to do so" (p. 72).

Stephens indicated that there was a socially forbidden dimension in his same-sex friendships. In his introduction to an original composition, Stephens invoked the examples of Ruth and Naomi, David and Jonathan, Damon and Pythias, and then referred to "one whom we could love if we dare to do so." Indicating that the problem involved society's rules, Stephens explained that "we feel as if there is something radically wrong in the present make up and constitution of things and we are almost ready to rebel at the established order" (p. 241).

If we sense anything radically wrong, it is Quinn's own false reporting of the documents and their interpretation. He misinforms his readers when he claims Stephens made remarks introducing his music to the assembly (p. 241). None of the comments are from Stephens. The introductions throughout the program were prepared and given by Dr. Joshua H. Paul, president of the university. Paul's remarks are presented out of context and given a wrong meaning by Quinn. Nothing indicates that Paul's comments were about "same-sex" relationships—quite the contrary. Indeed, we can find no homosexual references anywhere in the entire program. The student publication described the program as follows:

"Stephens Day" was the most remarkable and beautiful program of song ever rendered in our school

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198 Quinn erroneously dates this event to 1903 (p. 242).
and perhaps in the State. The songs of love and home by our poet-singer, Evan Stephens, rendered under his own direction by a number of the leading artists of the city, with a descriptive introduction of each piece by President Paul, constituted altogether a unique and delightful entertainment of the highest order and of the most impressive significance.199

In the next issue of the student publication, further details were given, including many "explanatory remarks made during the entire program by President Paul."200 Paul's comments make clear the strong moral message expressed in Stephens's songs, including love of home, the importance of love and fidelity between husbands and wives, and the heritage of the pioneers.201 Paul then introduced two "songs of friendship," which were further described by Paul (in the Deseret News account of his remarks), as songs containing "the most fitting expression of the emotions of unrequited love and of the resignation which in noble minds follows such a disappointment."202 President Paul then went on to discuss such friendship, ending with a quotation from a well-known poet (not Stephens), as he did in each other section of the program.203 The verse which concludes Paul's commentary is the one Quinn wrongly says is Stephens's "same-sex love song." The following is Paul's introduction:

Ever since the days of Ruth and Naomi, of David and Jonathan, of Damon and Pythias, the delineation in song and story of human friendship, must be regarded as one of the choicest phases of composition. One in whom we can confide when we need advice, and to whom we can go in times of perplexity, is knit to us by closer ties than those merely of the wise counselor and

199 Gold 3/5 (1 January 1903): 4, emphasis added.
201 Ibid., 3-5.
202 "Fine Program in Barratt Hall," Deseret Evening News, 19 December 1902, 2, emphasis added. Quinn did not consult this important source.
203 For President Paul's tendency to quote poetry frequently in his talks, often unattributed, see the example of his address in Children's Friend (August 1912): 424-28.
judge. The friendship depicted in the two songs “Parting Friends,” and “By the Brooklet,” is of that warmer and more intimate relation, the severance of which is felt to be a bereavement. When we part with one whom we could love if we dared to do so, that is, if it were proper and rational to love this dear friend, we feel as if there is something radically wrong in the present make up and constitution of things, and we are almost ready to rebel at the established order. We are in the mood to say:

Ah, friend, could you and I conspire
To wreck this sorry scheme of things entire,
We’d break into bits, and then—
Remold it nearer the heart’s desire.204

This poetry was not written by Stephens (nor did he claim it to be his), nor was it sung at the concert, as Quinn claims, but is a quatrain from the Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyam.205 It was known distinctly then, as it is today, as a heterosexual expression in the Islamic tradition.206 It would have been recognized by most persons in the audience, as the Rubáiyát was enormously popular at the time and a subject for study in literature classes.207 The

204 “Stephens’ Day at School,” 5.
205 We express appreciation to Prof. Gordon K. Thomas for assistance and background information on the Rubáiyát. The passage appears to be from one of Edward Fitzgerald’s famous English translations. The slight variations in Paul’s quotation may have come from quoting from memory or perhaps were influenced by another available translation. For additional discussion, see Rhett S. James, “Poem Authored by Omar Khayyam,” Logan (Utah) Cache Citizen, 13 June 1996, 16.
206 President Paul could not have intended anything else. Only a few days before the program honoring Stephens, he gave a forceful sermon in the Salt Lake Tabernacle on the need to maintain sexual purity, including a reference to the sins of Sodom, which in Paul’s time included what would today be termed homosexual conduct. Paul’s expression yet again undermines Quinn’s thesis of early Latter-day Saint tolerance toward such behavior. “Services at the Tabernacle,” Deseret Evening News, 1 December 1902, 8.
207 For a contemporary note on its popularity see “A New Translation of Omar Khayyam,” Deseret Evening News, 6 January 1900. The article indicated that the market was being flooded with new translations, and mentioned its
message Paul derives from this verse in the context of the poem from which it comes is that when we confront those inexorable conditions and distresses in life—death, the passage of time, the parting with beloved persons—our emotions are such that we are tempted to rebel and would change these conditions if we could. But we would also seek the mitigation and comfort of heaven and the angels, as the context of the Rubáiyát suggests. President Paul’s overall message (and of the songs of Stephens), is that the Latter-day Saint will muster faith and remain true, having confidence that God will yet bring consolation and fulfillment from that which was “Sown in the days of weeping.” Paul’s remarks were an appropriate introduction to the musical expression of “unrequited love,” deep “disappointment” and a trusting “resignation” to God’s will. They had nothing to do with “same-sex” behavior of any kind.

The two songs introduced by Paul were duets for a man and woman, each representing the love of parting heterosexual friends. They appear to reflect a grieving in Stephens. We have already touched on Welsh grieving patterns, where death and celibacy often resulted, and Stephens was very Welsh. Of the two songs, we think “By the Brooklet” is of particular significance to an understanding of Stephens. In publishing the words of it in a review of the concert, the Deseret News noted that it was being printed for the first time, and that it was “the earliest of [Stephens’s] compositions on friendship.” It is reprinted here from that source. We think it autobiographical, for it speaks of a young man and woman joyfully in love, the death of the woman, the grief of the man and the anticipated happy reunion in the afterlife. It reflects the Mormon belief in eternal marriage beyond the grave, which was Stephens’s hope. The text indicates which verses are to be sung by the man or the woman, and it is anything but a “same-sex love song.” When it was performed at the concert, the reporter said that it “quite captivated the audience with its beauty and tenderness.”

“appeal to a very wide circle of nineteenth century readers,” and that it tended to “echo . . . their own doubts and questionings.”

208 “Historian’s Portrayal of Early Mormons Distorted,” 1.
209 “Fine Program in Barratt Hall.”
210 “Stephens’ Day at School,” 5.
traditions, this song is about Evan Stephens when he was engaged to the “girl from Weber Valley” and about her death in the winter before their intended marriage.

By the Brooklet

(Both)
By the brooklet in the grove
Light of heart we used to rove,
And our songs among the trees
Were borne afar upon the breeze;
Hand in hand without a care,
Dreaming of a future fair,
While our shouts, so merry still,
Re-echoed from the distant hill;
The heavens seemed to grow more bright,
Those sunny days and moonlit nights,
And earth seemed fair as heaven to me,
While roaming there I’d be with thee.

The happy songs we used to sing
Had such a gay and careless ring,
They filled our hearts with such delight
That e’en the gloomiest day seemed bright.

(He)
Happiest moments swiftest fly,
Fairest flowers soonest die;
So one morn I learned to know
Time had changed our joy to woe.
And in vain I strove to sing
With that same old careless ring;
O’er my life had come a change,
Heaven and earth seemed cold and strange.

(Both)
By the brooklet in the grove
Light of heart no more we rove,
And the merry shouts are still
That echoed from the distant hill.
If the heart still beats as true,
All those pleasures we'll renew,
Every joy we may restore
That we prized so much of yore;
If the heart be not estranged
From the things we deem so changed,
Skies may brightened be above
By the magic power of love.

Paul may have been aware of Stephens’s early experiences with “unrequited love,” for such an understanding appears to inform his remarks. He was a close friend of Stephens, who may have confided in him. Looking back to this time, Stephens wrote most respectfully of Paul’s qualities and of the love he felt “whenever my mind reverts to the dear by-gone-days of Deseret University and later of the L. D. S. University,” and to his “beloved friend, Joshua H. Paul.”

We can be confident that Quinn’s statements about the meaning of Stephens’s song are groundless. Stephens never said “that there was a socially forbidden dimension in his same-sex friendships” (p. 241), nor did any of his songs even remotely “indicate that Evan Stephens wanted to live in a culture” tolerating homosexual conduct, as Quinn imagines, “where he could freely share homoerotic experiences

211 “Fine Program in Barratt Hall.”
with the young men he openly loved in every other way” (p. 242). Stephens surely did not present a song or narrative that provided “encouragement for same-sex friends to ‘rebel at the established order,’ and ‘dare’ to love according to their ‘heart’s desire’” (p. 426). The textual record shows something altogether different, and it shows that Quinn’s assertions derive from his own imagination. By claiming the possibility of a “socially forbidden dimension,” Quinn again contradicts his basic thesis that homosexual conduct was tolerated by Latter-day Saints during the nineteenth-century.

**Stephens and His Students**

Stephens was in his mid-sixties when he wrote a series of articles for the *Children’s Friend*, intended for use in instructing children in Primary classes. In these lesson materials Stephens recalls his childhood in Wales and his youth in Utah and adapts his narrative and comments to be meaningful to the children. The series was entitled “Evan Bach: A True Story for Little Folk, by a Pioneer” (p. 250 n. 12). Quinn says this is “a play on the name of German composer J. S. Bach” and that “Stephens himself authored these third-person autobiographical articles that lacked a byline” (p. 233). Quinn misses the point. In Welsh “his mother called him Evan Bach from *backgen* meaning boy and *bach* meaning small,” an expression of endearment as in “my dear little boy,” and one in common use in Wales today. By mistaking the Welsh *bach* for J. S. Bach, Quinn demonstrates his failure to understand Stephens and his misunderstanding of things Welsh.

In these articles in the *Children’s Friend*, Stephens is recalling things through the eyes of his childhood, a different culture and place. As for the mysterious lack of a byline, it is an expression of

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213 Quinn repudiates this unfounded statement himself by his own disclaimer: “It can only be a matter of speculation” that Stephens was anything but heterosexual, again showing the Janus-faced character of his writing. *Logan (Utah) Herald Journal*, 25 April 1996, 21. See the discussion about the “real Evan Stephens” at the end of this Stephens section.

214 *Children’s Friend* (January through December 1919); Bergman, *Children Sang*, 279.

215 Bergman, *Children Sang*, 21, emphasis in original.
modesty on Stephens’s part, for he is revealed as the author before the series is completed. In these essays, Stephens offers many choice experiences as examples to the children: love of home, parents and friends, faithfulness, integrity, appreciating hardships of the pioneers and the labor of others, developing talents, and enjoying the fruits of perseverance, to mention a few. But Quinn sees none of this. For Quinn, the Stephens essays are merely lines to read between in order to infer sexual allusions. Thus, in the recollection of his normal childhood admiration for the “manliness” of the young adult farmhands in Wales, we are expected to see in a young lad a homosexual interest in the male form (see p. 234). Stephens spoke of the “form to admire” in “the creature Man” (his italics). He also pointed out that in the young men could be seen “a truly superior race of beings.” “Creature” is the important concept here. He is inviting the children to consider the wonder of the human creation to be seen around them and to begin to appreciate the marvel of humankind, created in the image of God.

We believe that thoughtful readers who consider these articles in full will not agree with Quinn’s characterization of Evan Stephens. As Jeffery O. Johnson has said:

We need to see these articles in context, and in context to my eyes they look ... very much like a middle-aged man, talking about his experiences, and trying to translate those experiences for Primary [children] ... and not confessing or “coming out” in them.

Johnson further observed that he does not think the church authorities would have seen the Children’s Friend articles as a confession by Stephens, Felt, and Anderson, and therefore does

216 Teachers and others surely knew that Stephens was the author of the series. See the notice of the beginning of the series in Deseret Evening News, 4 January 1919, sec. 4, p. 3. The articles are “evidently going to tell incidents in the life of that popular instructor and leader of choirs and children’s choruses, Evan Stephens.”

217 Children’s Friend (November 1919): 432.

"not believe they exhibited any tolerance in leaving them in their [church] positions." 219

The same applies to Stephens and his youthful friends in Willard, Utah, who are mentioned in the Children's Friend. Stephens was a young musical prodigy who was admired and encouraged in his talents by the men and women in the local choir and community, but nothing suggests an unchaste association. Quinn would paint the whole village "gay," which is ridiculous. Stephens formed strong and lasting friendships, and friendship was important to him throughout his life and was a common cultural value of the time. No evidence has been found to show us that Stephens's place in the choir and village was anything but that of a God-fearing Christian. Stephens said, "the two great passions of [my] life seemed now to be growing very rapidly, love of friendship and music" (p. 233). Of a dear friend at age sixteen he remembered (p. 234): "What a treasure a chum is to an affectionate boy!" He was teaching the importance and lasting value of friendship and was using a term for a close friend that he thought would be understood by the children of the day, and "boy chum" was then used in the editorial captions for photographs of two of his young friends in the "Children's Friend" (pp. 235, 237). Quinn mistakenly thinks "chum" or "boy chum" sounds unusual enough today to suggest some ulterior meaning, since he continues to use it for effect in connection with Stephens's adult male friends and the young men who boarded in his house; but such use stems from Quinn, not Stephens. A historian should know better than to suggest that a sexual meaning was intended by Stephens and the editors of the Latter-day Saint magazine for children (pp. 83, 235, 240, 241, 242, 245, 259 n. 76, 369, 431, 433).

We cannot find that Stephens continued to use the word chum as might be suggested by Quinn's repetition, except as he recalls someone from his youth. Like men of his time, Stephens did sometimes use boy or boys in referring to young men. Along with Sarah Daniels, who served as housekeeper, a number of young men, and some young women, lived in Stephens's home while they attended school or university. Several females were his own

219 Ibid.
Stephens helped many of them with their expenses and even enabled some to study for advanced degrees outside Utah. Clearly, he regarded both male and female students with paternal-like care and even said to one, “I believe I love you... as much as your father does” (p. 240). He was proud of what his nephews, nieces, children of close friends, and students achieved, and continued to follow their lives and careers with great interest. Among them were two medical doctors, a dentist, a lawyer and judge, a mission president and public official, musicians, and successful businessmen and businesswomen. They and their families retained great respect for Stephens. He was a financially generous, kindly, genial, and loyal figure who visited many of these families when travel permitted.

How then did Stephens use the term boys? To refer affectionately to those he nurtured, especially those who went forth and succeeded and in whom he took justifiable pride. Stephens regarded his students as “my sons and daughters.” In the same spirit, he spoke of the singers of the Tabernacle Choir. After their tour of the Eastern states in 1911, which was a triumph for Stephens and the choir, he praised their performance in New York, saying “how proud of my boys and girls I was.” On the same trip, we see his typical use of boy. He said that “at Baltimore I spent the day with my ‘boy,’ Dr. Willard Christopherson, and his good wife.” Stephens helped finance Christopherson through medical school at Johns Hopkins University. When using the term boy, Stephens would usually place it in quotation marks. He spoke of those performing in a testimonial for him in the Tabernacle in 1917: “Prof. Joseph Ballantyne and Prof. Squire Coop were each young members of my Ogden singing.

220 Bergman, “Author Disputes Quinn on Life of Evan Stephens.”
221 Bergman, Children Sang, 214.
222 This is clear from several references in the letters Stephens wrote to Samuel B. Mitton and the Mitton family, photocopies of which are in our possession.
223 “Leader and Organist of the Tabernacle Choir Review the Tour,” Deseret Evening News, 2 December 1911, 11, emphasis added.
224 Ibid.
class away back in 1883—hence in the full sense are both ‘my boys.’”226 Stephens's usage was not strange. In reviewing newspapers of the period we frequently found boy used to indicate someone who had gone out from the community and succeeded. For example: “Salt Lake Boy’s Promotion” in reference to a mature man appointed secretary to a railroad president.227 Or “Another Utah Boy’s Success” referring to the receipt of a Ph.D. in Chicago;228 and numerous references to the “Utah boys” serving in World War I, such as “Utah Boy Wins High Honors at Annapolis.”229 This common and innocent use shows caring and regard, nothing like Quinn suggestively referring to the young men as Stephens’s “live-in ‘boy chums’” (p. 83 n. 33). It should also be noted that Stephens’s close friends were not teenage boys, but mature men and women. Quinn fails to translate the past into a present understanding.

What was the sexual orientation of Stephen’s “boys”? After all his insinuation and innuendo, Quinn produces no evidence from any source that Stephens and his male and female boarders had anything other than a heterosexual orientation. All the evidence is on the heterosexual side. Quinn may challenge our statement because of what he purports as evidence in a poem he cites, but his use of the poem is mistaken and misleading. The poem appeared among the articles Stephens prepared for the Children’s Friend, and was titled “Friends.” Quinn has miscalculated here. His imagination wanders far beyond the historical sources, and he appears to superimpose his homosexual preference on the objects of his research. Quinn’s approach to this poem provides another example of his misuse of sources, abusing the trust of his readers. The claims he makes about the poem are totally unsupported by the full text, the context in which it appeared, the purpose and intent of Stephens and the editors, and the cultural background the poetry represents.

For his own purpose, Quinn quoted only the first eight lines of the poem. His placement of a period at the end of that part makes

227 Deseret Evening News, 5 December 1898, 6.
228 Deseret Evening News, 12 September 1911, 2.
it appear complete, and he even refers to the eighth line as the "last line" of the poem (p. 241). Because the part Quinn suppressed is helpful in determining what Stephens and the editors of the children's magazine really intended, we quote the entire poem as it appeared there.

Friends

We have lived and loved together,
   Slept together, dined and supped,
Felt the pain of little quarrels,
   Then the joy of waking up;
Held each other's hands in sorrows,
   Shook them hearty in delight,
Held sweet converse through the day time,
   Kept it up through half the night,
O we've borne the sweetest title,
   Ever given by man to man
That of Friend, one to the other,
   Faithful, loyal through life's span.
Drawn together by a magnet
   Kept together by its pow'rs,
*Love of friendship*—human blessing,
   Lighting life's dark lonely hours.230

Quinn's technique needs discussion. In quoting only the first part of the poem, he gives undue weight to "Slept together," thus trying to support his claim that it was a "poem about male bed-mates" (p. 241), rather than the poetic and general expression about human friendship which was intended and was stressed in the conclusion of the poem. It is a good and representative example of a poem on friendship, a genre very popular at the time, examples of which often appeared in Latter-day Saint magazines in Stephens's day.231 It would have been so recognized then, with

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231 Compare purpose and parallels in Benj. Hollingsworth, "Friendship," *Millennial Star* 45 (30 April 1883): 288. See also "We Have Lived and Loved Together," a popular contemporary poem of the noted Charles Jefferys, the first line of which is identical with the one we are discussing, in *The Best Loved*
none of the unchaste and sexual connotations Quinn imposes. His anachronistic interpretation of such expressions as "Slept together" is repetitive in the book, as we saw in his treatment of Joseph Smith. The probability of such terms having sexual connotations at the time is so remote that the context would have to demand that most improbable interpretation. The context here does not support the idea, either in the poem itself, or in the setting in which it was published. Following the caution of historian Anthony Rotundo, one needs to be alert throughout Quinn’s book to the "meanings attached to the experience of two males (or two females) sharing a bed. In our own time, the phrase 'sleeping together' has become a euphemism for sexual intimacy, but in the nineteenth century that phrase still carried its literal [nonsexual] meaning." Thus, "from the earliest years of childhood, males shared beds—as had been the practice for centuries—and continued to do so throughout their lives, without homoerotic desire or the suspicion of homoerotic intent." Quinn knows this, but appears determined to advance his erotic interpretation anyway.

In our reading of Quinn’s discussion and notes, we have not found that he presents any evidence that Stephens shared a bed with anyone in his life. It is all carefully constructed innuendo. One may speculate on the probability that as a child Stephens may have shared a bed in the one-room “little log hut” in Willard, Utah, but even on this subject Stephens himself writes of “a home made bed in one corner, and my bedding rolled up in another, on

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Poems of the American People, ed. Hazel Felleman (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1936), 34.

232 See Quinn’s index under “Bedmates” and “Sleeping with.”


235 Quinn is familiar with the works of Rotundo and Yacovone cited here (pp. 121 n. 11, 361 n. 118).
Quinn totally ignores this statement of Stephens. In spite of the fact that he has no evidence, Quinn implies that these lines of poetry concern Stephens and the students who boarded in his Salt Lake City home. We will see that the poem was used to illustrate something else entirely. The fact is that the students are not discussed by Stephens anywhere in the articles. In any case, we know that persons who lived in the Stephens home recount that he was very strict in his living arrangements. Sarah Daniels and the young ladies stayed upstairs. Evan had his own room off by himself. The boys stayed in the other end of the house, separated from Evan and the women.

Quinn refers to the students as Stephens's "boyfriends," a suggestive term not found in the poem or other sources. Quinn's insinuation of unchastity, and the manner in which he expresses it, is in poor taste, coarse, and even salacious, suggesting what would have been criminal conduct for an adult then and now (pp. 72, 117-18, 241, 430-31). Nothing in the poem and its context implies anything of the kind. Since Quinn tries to reinforce his claims by repetition in various places, we will bring together several of his false statements to make apparent the impression he seeks to create. Readers should compare the poem with the following assertions that Quinn would have us think are based upon it. It is outright fabrication for Quinn to claim that this verse "indicated that all [Stephens's] youthful boyfriends had shared his bed" (p. 430), or that he wrote it "to celebrate the many same-sex relationships he 'dared' to enter with male teenagers who shared his bed" (pp. 117-18). The "dared" is not from Stephens as Quinn makes it appear, but from Joshua Paul, in connection with Paul's quotation from the Rubáiyát discussed above. It has nothing to do with Stephens or the students. As though repetition would establish truth, Quinn reiterates that the poem "showed that each of these young men shared his bed" (p. 241), or that the "boy chums shared his bed" (p. 431). He even inflates his assertions to write that "the middle-aged Stephens had a lifelong pattern of falling in love with teenage male singers who then

237 Interviews with Maud Thomas, Mabel Jones, and Melba Thomas Jones cited above.
became his bedmates” (p. 72), and that he “shared the same bed with a succession of beloved teenage boys and young men for years at a time.” These ideas are all from Quinn, not Stephens. They are very misleading, slanderous and without foundation, either in the poem or any other source. They are the kind of sensational statement that can influence book reviews and press comments and create an impression of Evan Stephens that is utterly false.

At the end of Stephens’s series of articles about his boyhood and youth, which ran each month during 1919, the editors indicated that he expected to write twelve more articles. Each would cover “one special interesting event in his life and labors specially written for the ‘Children’s Friend’ and the children.” One of these was to have been “an article showing glimpses of his home life and companions,” or those “who have shared his home life.” The editors must have viewed Stephens’s assistance and influence with these young men and women as an important aspect of his “life and labors,” and his efforts and their successes as something that would be an inspiration for the children. Unfortunately, Stephens’s busy travel schedule permitted him to write only nine of the articles and he never got to that subject at all. Nevertheless, Quinn incorrectly says that these 1920 articles “emphasized different aspects of Stephens’s adult life, including his same-sex relationships” (p. 233). In this way he misrepresents the context of the poem. What Quinn does not make known is that the poem actually appears as an introduction to Stephens’s article on his experiences with the Tabernacle Choir, and in particular the choir’s tour of the Eastern States in 1911. That is the true context of the poem, and Quinn cannot escape it. It is a topic far removed from Quinn’s speculation. He also failed to consider the reason for the poem’s appearance in a magazine for children and how it would serve as lesson material for them. His own interpretation would be unthinkable for that purpose.

239 Children’s Friend (December 1919): 473.
240 Ibid.
241 Children’s Friend (June 1920): 228.
Stephens continued in the next issue, explaining his aim in an article titled “Having a Firm Foundation.”\footnote{Children’s Friend (July 1920): 276.} While one can see in the poem a reflection of the friendly associations and traveling dynamics of the choir “in a long train made up of Pullman [sleeper] coaches,”\footnote{Children’s Friend (June 1920): 228.} it is important to recognize the broader implications of the poem for the choir, and its emphasis on the true Christian love and fellowship that Stephens deemed so important to the success of the choir’s ministry. This love and friendship applied to both men and women—the “man to man” of the poem would have been understood then as being generic, referring to mankind. Friendship was a “human blessing.” The brotherly and sisterly love of Christian friends is referred to in Stephens’s distinctive phrase love of friendship, which we have italicized in the poem above. The same phrase is also found in his discussion of his teenage experiences in Willard, Utah, and the “love of friendship,” which he says was developing at that age along with his love of music (p. 233, Stephens’s italics). This is a significant correspondence, and it is lost when the last part of the poem is withheld. It bids us recall Stephens’s description of the innocent and religiously motivated love felt among members of the Willard choir, and his musical friends, both male and female. He saw the Willard choir as “a great good-natured family.”\footnote{Children’s Friend (November 1919): 433.} His analogy of the family would apply also to the Tabernacle Choir in Salt Lake City. Stephens stressed the lifelong importance of faithfulness among such friends, as does the poem, and wrote to the children that he yet regarded “the men and boys of my early youth as equal to any I have known and life has given me no treasures greater than the friends whom I loved as a boy.”\footnote{Children’s Friend (October 1919): 387.} The poem Friends continues to be used today among the Stephens family and relatives to celebrate family loyalty, comradeship, and Christian devotion to one another.

In discussing the article that contained the poem, Stephens specifically related the choir’s 1911 success to the preparations begun in his early days in Salt Lake City. He found that the “major part of the singers who sang . . . in the great cities of the
east were the very same little boys and girls, and young people who came to my classes... in 1882, now grown into middle-aged women and men—putting into practice what they learned to do in their youth, under my direction.”246 They were friends who were “faithful, loyal through life’s span.” He further used this illustration to remind the Primary teachers of the importance of giving the children a good and sure foundation for their progress. Others observed Stephens’s “labors” among the children and youth, and the true friendship he displayed: “Professor Stephens saw the children of his early choruses grow to manhood and womanhood, and he watched their course in life with tender affection... No father could be prouder than he is of their success.”247

Regarding his first experience in a choir in Salt Lake City, Stephens recalls the genial director “filling every heart with a feeling of welcome and brotherly love.”248 Stephens devoutly sought that spirit when he directed his singers, so that they “not only learned to love to sing and read music, but even learned to greatly love one another,”249 an allusion to John 13:34–35. He saw the strength and success of the Tabernacle Choir in “our having learned to love both the work and one another.”250 When the choir returned from its tour in 1911, it sang in the Tabernacle for “loved ones and friends.”251 Stephens likened the performance before the large audience to the well-known concept of the Christian agape, saying that there were “tears of joy and love upon many cheeks,” and that “it was not only a wonderful musical performance, but a great love feast.”252

The term love feast comes from the epistle of Jude (Jude 1:12 NRSV),253 which warns Christians against permitting apostates to defile their gatherings. The text draws a sharp contrast between godly love and the lust of those who “pervert the grace of our God into licentiousness,” following the example of Sodom and

246 Children’s Friend (July 1920): 276.
248 Children’s Friend (November 1919): 432, emphasis added.
249 Children’s Friend (July 1920): 276, emphasis added.
250 Ibid.
251 Children’s Friend (June 1920): 230.
252 Children’s Friend (July 1920): 276, emphasis added.
Gomorrah and others (Jude 1:3–7 NRSV). The early church was further warned:

These are grumblers and malcontents; they indulge their own lusts; they are bombastic in speech, flattering people to their own advantage. But you, beloved, must remember the predictions of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; for they said to you, "In the last time there will be scoffers, indulging their own ungodly lusts." It is these worldly people, devoid of the Spirit, who are causing divisions. But you, beloved, build yourselves up on your most holy faith; pray in the Holy Spirit; keep yourselves in the love of God; look forward to the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life. (Jude 1:16–21 NRSV)

Stephens's use of the phrase a great love feast evokes the image of the highest form of Christian piety, the agape-theology of the ancient saints.\footnote{254} This is the kind of sincere and chaste Christian love reflected in the poem, or it would not have been placed in an article about the choir. It shows the relevance of the "lived and loved together" at the opening of the poem. As historian Donald Yacovone has stressed, the warm language referring to such love derives from traditional Christian or New Testament usage. In suggesting something other than a chaste allusion, Quinn has joined those "historians of gay and lesbian life [who] have distorted our view of pre-modern and pre-Freudian sexuality and culture by mistaking the language of religious ecstasy and sincerity, or agape, for homoeroticism or outright homosexuality."\footnote{255}

In reflecting on the cultural aspects of the poem, we are impressed by the family imagery which undergirds it, so that it is not only applicable to the choir in a poetic and figurative sense, but reflects also Stephens’s extensive experience with family life. This


\footnote{255} Yacovone, "Language of Fraternal Love," 94.
is why the "slept together" is a poetic expression and has nothing to do with bed sharing, but with the concept of "shared home life" as expressed by the editors. Thus the poem mentions sleeping, waking, common eating and conversation—a participation in the association, schedule, and economy of the home and family. Beyond the immediate family of his childhood, Stephens always maintained a close and loving association with his relatives and extended family. Obviously he preferred to dwell in a family setting, and chose to live for many years with other families that remained dear to him. These included Shadrach Jones and his wife, Bishop George W. Ward and his family, and John J. Ward and his wife in Willard; the Alexander Lewis family in Logan, Utah; and, most importantly, Latter-day Saint musician and hymn composer Henry A. Tuckett in Salt Lake City. Of the Tucketts, Stephens recalled that he "was warmly welcomed into their little home. And though there was lacking room in the house for a separate bed room, the lounge and the parlor floor upon which to sleep were at my disposal, and I was made very comfortable." Stephens wrote that upon his arrival there in 1882, "I made my home for some years with him [Tuckett] and his good wife, and I shall ever think with pleasure of the many many evenings we spent together at the little organ, either discussing our own efforts or poring over the masterworks." The "little white cot" [cottage], as Stephens called it, became a mecca for musicians to gather very frequently and perform music for each other and the many neighbors who were invited to listen. Soprano Agnes Olsen Thomas met Stephens there, and he "became a very fast and dear

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256 Bergman, Children Sang, 57, 61, 64, 69, 81. See also obituary of Mrs. John J. Ward, in [Brigham City, Utah] News-Journal, 2 January 1941, 1. See also Box Elder Lore of the Nineteenth Century (Brigham City, Utah: Sons of Utah Pioneers, 1951), 135, and Lydia Walker Forsgren, comp., History of Box Elder County (Brigham City?, Utah: Box Elder County Daughters of the Pioneers, 1937), 178.

257 Children's Friend (May 1920): 184.

friend." She has left her description of these enthusiastic gatherings: "dear friends surrounded a small reed organ at which this genius was presiding. He could make the organ speak. Then all joined in song." Stephens wrote that "a very happy little group we were, forever, of evenings, either trying over my music or [Tuckett's], or that of Handel, Verdi, Wagner, etc." with the "leading young singers of the city" enjoying the hospitality and friendly association in the home. Such sociable evenings may well be reflected in the poem and began in the very year that Stephens said was the beginning of those friendships with persons who toured later with the choir. They included some of the very persons, Agnes Olsen Thomas among them, who were "middle-aged" participants in the choir's 1911 tour.

Stephens's Welsh culture has also influenced the language and imagery of the poem, an important aspect totally ignored by Quinn. Anthropologist Carol Trosset, in a study of "Welsh concepts of person and society," has shown that among the Welsh "anything to do with people should be approached emotionally," or "emotional engagement is the correct approach to people." This explains much about Stephens and the effusive mode of expression exemplified in this poem. Trosset added that

Welsh people seemed to me very emotional and effusive compared to what had been typical behavior in my home communities in the United States. Warmth is communicated through verbal content, tone of voice, and physical contact. . . . People also touch each other (in nonsexual ways) more than I was used to. A great deal of physical affection is directed toward both children and teenagers, but can also be observed between adult friends.

Recollections from members of the Stephens family also help explain the poem in the context of Evan's own family experience.

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259 Agnes Olsen Thomas, autobiography, as quoted in Bergman, Children Sang, 87.
261 Trosset, Welshness Performed, 150, and title page. The quotation comes from the chapter entitled "Being an Emotional Person."
262 Ibid., 150.
Melba Thomas Jones recalled that when her uncle Evan Stephens visited her family home in St. John, Idaho, Evan and her father would outlast the rest of the family and relatives and would talk, sing, and recite poetry “all night.” Relatives recall that the Welsh lifestyle of the family was intense and emotional “whether it was eating, sleeping, talking, singing, arguing, or making up with hugs or exuberant handshakes.” Certainly this style of family life was experienced by Evan Stephens in his home during both his childhood and in his adult years, especially in the Welsh communities of Willard, Utah, and St. John and Malad, Idaho, and among Welsh friends in Salt Lake City where he participated in Welsh organizations and musical activities. This kind of effusive family celebration is still found among Stephens’s Welsh relatives in 1998, as it is in Wales. Recently a travel writer observed this style of Welsh renewal which can be experienced anywhere in Wales today: “It can be a wonderful thing for an outsider to behold, even if it does occasionally keep you up at night.”

**Hint and Run**

As previously noted, those who stayed in Stephens’s home recall that he slept downstairs separated from the guests. And yet Quinn infers that Stephens was not homosexual merely because young men boarded with him; and he implies that these young men were not homosexual because they boarded with Stephens. This is, of course, preposterous. The young people came from Latter-day Saint homes where they would have been taught strict moral standards. Parents wanted them in Stephens’s home precisely because it was a moral and protective environment for them.

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263 Betty Hammond, tape recorded interview of Melba Thomas Jones, Malad, Idaho, 3 May 1996.

264 Rhett S. James, interview of Maude Thomas, Malad, Idaho, 30 December 1996.


266 Melba Thomas Jones, grand-niece of Evan Stephens and sister of Thomas Stephens Thomas, discussed below, recalls that “Uncle Evan—we children called him ‘Professor’ in those days—he slept in his own room on the main floor. Strict rules governed [those] who slept there.” Rhett S. James interview with Melba Thomas Jones cited above.
while they furthered their education. When directly confronted with these anomalies, even prior to the publication of *Same-Sex Dynamics*, Quinn admitted that Stephens possibly never engaged in same-gender sexual conduct. Why would Quinn quickly run from some of his most bizarre conclusions?

All that we know of Stephens's nephews and students indicates a strong heterosexual orientation. Each of these men married, and only Noel S. Pratt was childless. In an insinuating note, Quinn says that Pratt "did not marry until age thirty-six, divorced shortly afterward, and died shortly after that" (p. 237). What he does not tell us is the likely reason he did not marry sooner. For many years, Pratt was tormented with severe pain because of a rheumatic illness that eventually led to his untimely death. Eliese Peterson, of Logan, Utah, who married Pratt, loved him enough to marry him despite this hardship. And it does not appear that they divorced, for Stephens left a bequest for Pratt's widow in his will (p. 241). The *Deseret News* reported her as Pratt's widow. At his final illness, Stephens referred to him as "one of my 'Boys,' Judge Noel S. Pratt." Stephens had assisted Pratt to study law in Utah and at the University of Oregon. Returning to Utah, he became a lawyer and judge and was highly respected.

So overwhelming is the evidence of the marriages of these young men, without a single exception, that at one point Quinn is compelled to concede that "if there was any unexpressed erotic desire, it is possible that only Stephens felt it, since all his 'boy chums' eventually married" (p. 242). What evidence does Quinn present that Stephens "felt it"? Only his imagination, for Quinn admits that "it can only be a matter of speculation whether Stephens had sex with any of the young men he loved, lived with, and slept with throughout most of his life" (p. 242). But Quinn also grants that "homoerotic desire could have been absent altogether or unconsciously sublimated or consciously suppressed"

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269 Ibid.
270 Bergman, *Children Sang*, 246.
271 "City Judge Pratt of Salt Lake Dies," 1. Several very prominent members of the community spoke at his funeral.
in Stephens (p. 242). Quinn seems to want to protect himself by having it both ways. He tries to bolster his conjectures with a quotation from Stephens that some of his personal experience is “even too sacred to be told freely[,] only to myself” (p. 242). Quinn juxtaposes this statement with his innuendo-filled discussion of sexual matters, and one is led to believe there must be something perverse going on in the Stephens home. But the language quoted by Quinn comes from an entirely different context, in Stephens’s recollection of his early life before he boarded students in his Salt Lake City home.²⁷² It is far more likely alluding to the “lost love” when he anticipated marriage and to a comforting spiritual witness he had that eventually God would “wipe away all tears” (Revelation 21:4), a theme so well expressed by Stephens in his poem emphasizing fulfillment through death and resurrection that we have already quoted.

Samuel B. Mitton is another of Stephens’s friends subjected to Quinn’s innuendo. While Mitton never boarded in the Stephens home, Quinn nonetheless assigns him to be one of Stephens’s “significant ‘boy chums’” (p. 235, 433). Quinn has selected the wrong man to play his game. Mitton’s life is unusually well documented, and his strict moral commitments are evident in his writings, as well as in the minds of many still living who remember him. In addition to a biography by his son-in-law, we have Mitton’s many-volumed journal, a recorded oral history, many newspaper clippings, scrapbooks, numerous letters, including over seventy from Evan Stephens,²⁷³ and hundreds of poems, songs, hymns, and anthems that Mitton composed.

Mitton was happily married for sixty-six years and fully devoted to his wife and seven children. His values are reflected in his long and dedicated service as an LDS missionary, choir director, organist, high councilor, temple worker, and patriarch. But they are reflected even more in his expressive writings. “This lovely girl,” he wrote concerning his future wife, “completely captivated me. It was love at first sight on my part. She was so sweet and beautiful in feature and graceful in form, and natural goodness

²⁷³ A selection of twelve of Stephens’s letters is included in Bergman, Children Sang, 225–46.
fairly radiated from her face." The affectionate and sensitive love letters of his courtship were included in his biography. These family documents were known to Quinn, but he completely ignored them, for they make his innuendoes seem ridiculous. Mitton’s heterosexual orientation is clear in his correspondence and in many tender poems and songs he wrote for his wife. He held the church leaders in the highest esteem. His writings and conduct make clear that the gospel of Jesus Christ was the central motivation of his life, and all his musical interests and associations were intended to advance its cause.

Mitton met Stephens when he was seventeen and Stephens was twenty-six and they were organists in different LDS communities (p. 235). They met when they both played at a Sunday School conference or “Jubilee.” Their common interest in the furtherance of sacred music formed a bond between them. “O, how I loved music,” Samuel exclaimed, “it constantly dominated my thoughts... I loved and idolized all musicians. To me those who could sing and play were extraordinary and gifted people. I revered the great composers.” “My earliest recollection is my fondness for music,” he wrote in his journal. “I was self taught,” he said, and “there weren’t any music teachers in the valley.” It must have been a joy to him to meet Stephens, who could give him some encouragement and assistance. Samuel continued, recalling that

The first music copies I had access to were the Sunday School songs and hymns as printed in the Juvenile Instructor. Evan Stephens contributed regularly

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275 Ibid., 8–27.
276 Ibid., 28–35, for examples taken from a “book of songs given to Mary.”
278 Lindblad, Samuel Bailey Mitton, 69.
279 Ibid.
280 Ibid., 67.
281 Ibid., 68.
to this magazine. I am free to say Evan Stephens became my ideal as a composer and continued so throughout my life. We later became very close friends and kept up a regular correspondence. 282

Mitton and Stephens did not live near each other, but they did meet from time to time, on such occasions as when Mitton and his wife Mary called to chat with him in Salt Lake City, or went there for special musical events, or when Stephens had Mitton’s music performed in the Salt Lake Tabernacle. On the other hand, Stephens visited the Mitton home when Samuel performed some of Stephens’s new music with his Logan choir. In every instance, other members of the Mitton family or friends visited with Stephens when Samuel met with him. 283 When he came in 1920 to help rehearse Samuel’s choir to perform his cantata “The Vision,” Stephens “stayed in Logan for several days visiting with Samuel and Mary and their family.” 284 Stephens admired Mitton’s married life and family. Evan wrote to Samuel: “How blessed you are with your justly idolized partner.” 285

Stephens’s letters to Mitton often appear directed to the family, as well as to him. Mitton’s daughter remembers how the family loved and admired Evan Stephens and would gather around to hear his letters read, usually by her because she seemed best able to read Stephens’s difficult hand. 286 The letters strongly reflect their common musical interests, and in many of them Stephens is giving his appraisal and advice for improvement regarding compositions Mitton had sent him for that purpose. Clearly, Mitton considered him his mentor in music, and was deeply appreciative of Stephens’s interest in his musical endeavors. Quinn, grasping

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282 Ibid.
283 Ibid., 79–82, 84, 86, 89, 278, 280, referring to Mitton’s journals. Mitton did not own or drive an automobile, so he was always dependent on and accompanied by others when he visited Stephens’s home.
284 Ibid., 82.
285 Ibid., 294. Bergman has noted that Stephens “never espoused marriage and only vicariously admired families such as Samuel Mitton’s, where children and a devoted wife and husband lived together in harmony,” in “Author Disputes Quinn on Life of Evan Stephens.”
286 Mary Mitton Kennedy, interviewed by George L. Mitton, Salt Lake City, 17 June 1997.
for sexual content, stresses that they signed letters with “love” (p. 235). The documents suggest a Christian brotherly love and that “warm language between friends” was normal at the time (p. 232).287 Actually, the term is not frequent in the letters, which always display a certain reserve. Stephens’s normal salutation was “Dear Bro. Mitton,” never using the given name, and his closing was more typically “best regards from your friend and Bro.” This is a common Mormon reference to brotherhood in the kingdom of God. Expressions such as “Love to you and all” appear several times, usually before the close, and directed to all the family.

Mitton wrote in his journal at the death of Stephens: “No one will know what a loss his passing is to me. The world will never seem the same to me again” (p. 240). Mitton added these brief words that summarize their true interests and relationship: “Thus closed the mortal life of my dearest, sweetest friend and benefactor, Evan Stephens, Zion’s greatest composer and song writer.”288

**Stephens and His Nephew Thomas Stephens Thomas**

Evan Stephens’s grand-nephew, Thomas Stephens Thomas, came from Idaho to board in his home in Salt Lake City and attend the Latter-day Saints’ University, where he could prepare himself to go to New York to attend the Columbia Medical School. With Stephens’s financial help, Thomas later graduated with a medical degree. Thomas is the only boarder-student that Quinn attempts to discuss in any detail, so we will follow his treat-

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288 Lindblad, *Samuel Bailey Mitton*, 295. Quinn continues with a bizarre note, saying that Stephens left Mitton out of his will, and that it must have been a “bitter surprise” for Mitton. “Despite full access to his diaries, Mitton’s biographer made no reference to his exclusion from the will that remembered all of Evan’s other ‘boy chums’ and no mention of Mitton’s reaction to that omission. Either Mitton himself chose not to comment or his biographer chose not to tarnish his narrative of the loving relationship between Mitton and Stephens” (p. 259 n. 76). We have found no mention of the will in Mitton’s diary and suggest a third alternative: that the whole idea is ridiculous, for Mitton had no reason whatsoever to believe he should be included in Stephens’s will.
ment closely. Quinn’s discussion of this fine young man and his relationship with Stephens shows the use of innuendo at its extreme. It is instructive to see how Quinn weaves his homosexual bias around these two heterosexual men, not only in a tone of gossipy insinuation, but with a series of falsehoods that we will expose.

Stephens, always loyal to family, had reason to feel joy in his nephew’s accomplishments. Many were made possible by Stephens’s financial and moral support. Harold Jensen, a friend of both Stephens and his nephew, referred to Thomas as “put in the way of success by Professor Stephens,” and described him as “a blonde Viking who captured the eye of everyone as a superb specimen of manhood.”289 Why should we infer that he had nonheterosexual tendencies on the basis of that complimentary remark, which the context shows to be innocent? Yet Quinn seeks to create that impression by suggestive comments: he was, Quinn surmises, perhaps Stephens’s “live-in boyfriend,” or his association provided Stephens with his “most intense relationship with a male,” and Thomas was “the love of his life” (pp. 237, 238, 255 n. 52). These imaginings are gratuitous and offered by Quinn for effect.

Thomas’s photograph appeared in the college yearbook for 1914, and he was a handsome, mature-looking man. He was also a popular and socially active student, having been in the debating club and a class officer and president. The caption, like those with the photographs of other students, has a lighthearted comment: “Aye, every inch a king,” and “Also a ‘Queener’” (p. 238).290 Quinn latches onto the word “Queen,” claiming that the term “Queen was slang for male homosexual by the 1920s” (p. 257 n. 66).291 But the term is not “Queen” but “Queener.” Here it is necessary to determine what this word meant to the university students in 1914, and this Quinn has not done. In a student publication at the very time Stephens’s nephew was there, we find that it actually referred to someone who courted the girls, as in this

290 The S Book, Commencement Number (Salt Lake City: Students of the Latter-day Saints’ University, 1914), 12, 38.
291 Quinn, “Male-Male Intimacy,” 123 n. 76
humorous student verse: “Pretty girls in the class can be found there galore,/ Rhada, Marion, and Daphne, and some dozens more./ If you wished to advantage their “Queeners” to see/ Just peep in the Library at two forty-three.”

The context shows the heterosexual pairing of men and women. The same publication’s alumni column later recalled the nephew as “the idol of all the girls.”

This agrees with more general word studies where, in college use, circa 1915, queen as a verb meant “to go on a date or escort a girl” and queener was “a ladies man.”

The same usage was reported at Stanford University where “Those students who find time to court the women are called ‘queeners.’”

Nevertheless, Quinn uses a false idea to create a wrong impression, when in fact it does not relate to Stephens and his nephew in any way. Next, he does this again in another bogus passage.

Thomas, according to Quinn,

accompanied Stephens on the choir’s month-long trip to the eastern states in 1911. . . . However, the choir’s business manager, George D. Pyper, discreetly deleted Thomas’s name from the passenger list of the choir and “tourists” as published by the church’s official magazine, Improvement Era. Pyper had apparently been uncomfortable about same-sex relationships since 1887, when he served as the judge in the first trial of a sensational sodomy case involving teenagers” (p. 238).

There are serious problems in this assertion. First, the list does not appear in the Improvement Era, but in the Juvenile Instructor, although Quinn does manage to cite correctly the volume and page number (pp. 255–56 n. 54).

This was the magazine of

292 Gold and Blue (Commencement Number, 1912): 47.
293 Gold and Blue 16 (April 1916): 290.
294 Harold Wentworth and Stuart Berg Flexner, eds., Dictionary of American Slang (New York: Crowell, 1960), 415. Quinn is aware of this work, for he uses it in another connection (p. 101 n. 29).
296 The correct citation is [George D. Pyper], “Six Thousand Miles with the ‘Mormon’ Tabernacle Choir: Impressions of the Manager,” Juvenile Instructor 47 (March 1912): 132–33.
the Sunday School, of which Pyper was associate editor. Quinn misleads his readers. When we checked his reference we found that, contrary to his assertion, Stephens’s nephew was listed as a member of the choir on the trip. This fact undercuts Quinn’s argument. Nor can it be saved by mind-reading what Pyper “really” had in mind. Pyper, we have shown, always had great respect for Stephens.297 One should note also, that if it would have been “discreet” to delete the name, Quinn has again contradicted his basic premise that the community was relatively tolerant of homosexual conduct. And why would faithful Latter-day Saints have been more suspicious of the nephew on a trip surrounded by the entire choir, than of his openly boarding in Stephens’s home, which was common knowledge? Quinn’s treatment of Thomas is a jumble of self-contradictions.

We now confront the question of why Stephens resigned as director of the Tabernacle Choir in 1916. Quinn mistakenly says it was so he could “continue living with” his nephew (p. 238). We quote here the passage from which Quinn claims to derive the idea, with his quotation in italics. Stephens says that he

was honorably released at my own request under such arrangements as would leave me free to travel or reside, if I wished, at New York City, where I was taking a nephew I was educating as a physician, to enter Columbia University. After some months there feasting upon opera, concerts, etc., returned home to attend to home and garden; and settle down to composition and my ease.298

On the basis of this language, Quinn incorrectly asserts that “Stephens gave up his career for the ‘blond Viking’ who became the love of his life” (p. 238). The expression “blond Viking” is, of course, not Stephens’s, and for Quinn to refer to Stephens’s nephew as the “love of his life” is without textual support, and he callously ignores the grief and sorrows Stephens had known in the

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298 Evan Stephens, “The Life Story of Evan Stephens,” Instructor (March 1931): 133. Quinn observes that Stephens places this event in 1914 rather than 1916 in this account. But the editor noted that it came from penciled notes found among his effects. Probably it was a draft and not in final form.
past over the loss of his "Weber girl" and his courtship of Sarah. Beyond that, Stephens does not actually say that visiting his nephew was the reason for his resignation, but only that it was on terms that permitted him to be free of any remaining obligations. If it were to be regarded as a reason, it is simplistic, allowing Stephens to avoid discussing in public the real causes of his leaving, which involved differences over how the choir should be managed, and a sixty-year-old man's general fatigue after twenty-six years of gathering volunteer singers into a high quality choir. Surely Quinn knows this. He must, since he concedes in a note that his idea "could be disputed" (p. 256 n. 57). In a private letter to Samuel B. Mitton, Stephens explained:

I, at the end of my Choir journey wish you much success and joy in yours on which you are just starting. The entire trouble here is the growth of conflicting duties to which my singers are subject, and which impeded our progress to such a degree that I can rely practically on no results from our best efforts. I have tried hard to have something done whereby the Choir should not be the one to suffer, but the local authorities of wards and stakes from which our singers are drawn oppose any action which may draw them from any activities at home, that the presidency feel they cannot afford to fight them over the matter. So we have all agreed to try the "new broom" idea to see if it will help to at least aid for the time being.

While it is a disappointment to me not to be able to get the material I needed for the sort of work I wanted to do, and there is a natural sadness in giving up one's life work as it were. Still it is a great relief to have the many burdens removed, and to at least be released from trying the impossible. I expect to spend most of the fall and winter—perhaps in New York, just taking in the musical things of the metropolis. I am grateful to you for your enthusiastic support by using and liking
my songs. Let me hear from you once in a while. I am ever your Bro. E. Stephens.299

In September 1916 Stephens traveled east with his nephew and a fellow student, who were going to medical school at the time. Stephens planned a trip to enjoy the musical performances. The Deseret News reported that Stephens and his nephew stayed at a hotel (for effect Quinn calls this their “living arrangements”), until his nephew found housing with fellow students of Columbia University (pp. 238–39). In a richly documented visit, Stephens enjoyed a very busy musical season in New York, returning to Utah early in December.300

We now encounter some of the most questionable scholarship in Quinn’s entire book. Quinn writes:

Stephens later indicated that Thomas’s intended student-living arrangement did not alter his “desire” to be near the young man. A few weeks after the Deseret News article, the police conducted a well-publicized raid on a homosexual bathhouse in New York City. (p. 239)

As we will show, Stephens later “indicated” nothing like that, and did not even mention his nephew’s living arrangement. Quinn apparently uses the word “desire” to suggest a sexual connotation not found in the text. Similarly, the gratuitous reference to the bathhouse has nothing to do with Stephens and his nephew. Quinn does not even identify where it was and does not establish any connection whatever with Stephens. More subtle innuendo—it is all there for the impression, with no substance behind it. In a note, Quinn claims that a well-known bathhouse was “only a few blocks from the hotel where Stephens and his ‘boy chum’ were staying,” but then is forced to admit that it probably had not operated for thirteen years before the arrival of Stephens and Thomas (p. 256 n. 59). Nonetheless, Quinn has planted the seed with his reference to a bathhouse. Why does Quinn mention the

bathhouse, unless to create a phony impression? As for the word *desire*, it comes from an interview in Utah months later, soon after a wonderful testimonial for Stephens in the Salt Lake Tabernacle,\(^1\) where a reporter asked Stephens about his activities now that he no longer had the responsibility for the choir. In genial comments Stephens talked about his vegetable garden, his many new compositions,\(^2\) and his intent to attend several concerts to honor him around the West. He then touched on his "desire" to travel, saying:

Add to these a long *desired* trip to California, where some dear friends of mine have recently become interested in an orange grove, coupled with a *desire* to return ere long to my nephew, Mr. Thomas, in New York, and you will realize that I am not pining away from ennui, but that I am following the bent which I always intended to do after retiring from active public work.\(^3\)

Compare this with the claim Quinn bases upon it. Clearly Stephens did not "indicate" anything of what he thought of his nephew’s living arrangements, but Quinn leaves the impression that he did.

We come to one more indignity brought about by another of Quinn’s groundless statements. He says that "Stephens apparently returned later that spring [1917] and took up residence in the East Village of lower Manhattan, which is where the census indicated Thomas was living" (p. 239). "Apparently" from what? Quinn has substituted his wishful thinking for research. The truth is that Stephens never "took up residence" in New York at any time.\(^4\)

\(^1\) "Stephens' Great Testimonial," *Deseret Evening News*, 7 April 1917, sec. 1, p. 16.


\(^3\) "Professor Stephens Enlists as a Food Producer," *Deseret Evening News*, 21 April 1917, sec. 2, p. 6, emphasis added.

\(^4\) Stephens never retired from choirs and music in Utah. Soon after returning to Utah from his musical jaunt in November 1917, Stephens was appointed musical director of Granite Stake, to work with the congregations to improve the musical work, as he said, "for the people of the stake in which I re-
Stephens certainly did not go there to live with his nephew, who continued to live with fellow students. As for the census, it was not taken for three years, and by that time Thomas was living with his wife (p. 258 n. 68). Quinn fashions a false picture of the two men. He launches into a lurid discussion of homosexual activities near the Village, none of which has a thing to do with Stephens and Thomas. Quinn then incorrectly claims that

Thomas apparently wanted to avoid the stigma of being called a New York “fairy,” which had none of the light-hearted ambiguity of the “Queener” nickname from his school days in Utah. Unlike the openness of his co-residence with Stephens in Utah, Thomas never listed his Village address in the New York City directories (p. 239).

This discussion assumes things about the men which are false and inconsistent with the known facts concerning their lives. Again Quinn ignores the fact that “Queener” simply meant a lady’s man and not a “Queen,” as in current homosexual usage. It is absurd to suppose that Thomas, or anyone else, would be more sensitive among New York’s millions than in Mormon Utah. Most likely Thomas’s name did not appear in the city directories because he was living in student housing, which would be regarded as temporary. Thomas’s “openness” living in Utah goes a long way to establish the falsity of Quinn’s assertions. Stephens was to see his nephew briefly during his musical excursions to

side.” See “Prof. Evan Stephens Made Music Director,” Deseret Evening News, 26 November 1917, 8, emphasis added. He practiced with and conducted the choirs for the church general conference in April. Deseret Evening News, 8 April 1918, 3. We have notes on nearly fifty newspaper accounts, between 1917 and 1920, showing Stephens in the West for many busy activities, and only in New York for the brief periods that we have noted. Evan Stephens’s work for the LDS Church did not end in 1916. Stephens’s cantata “The Vision,” commissioned by LDS Church President Heber J. Grant, was first performed in 1920, and “The Martyrs” was performed in 1921.

305 A correspondent in New York mentions that the house, occupied by the eight students, “two of whom are well known Utah boys,” had a fire and all moved to another house, also near the medical school. One was the “nephew of Prof. Evan Stephens.” Note how the reporter uses boys here. “Salt Lakers in Gotham,” Deseret Evening News, 10 March 1917, sec. 2, p. 7.
New York in the fall of 1917,³⁰⁶ and again two years later in 1919, when he noted that it had been two years since “I left my youngest ‘boy’” for him to “work out his medical salvation at that chief seat of medical torture for ambitious young doctors, Columbia University.”³⁰⁷ Note that from 1917 through 1919, Stephens could not have done what Quinn would have us believe—that he “took up residence” in New York with his nephew, having resigned his leadership of the choir to do so. In his 1919 visit, Stephens was able to meet Thomas’s fiancée, and he met with the couple several times during his stay.³⁰⁸ Their marriage occurred soon after, in December 1919.³⁰⁹ In 1923, while on a trip East to make some recordings, Stephens “had a nice visit with my dear Boy Tom who is doing just fine as a Doctor in Morristown, New Jersey.” He stayed “with him and his good wife for nine days, running over to New York City to see the town, the sights and the shows.”³¹⁰ Stephens continued to show interest in the success of his nephew and in his wife and children.

Stephens’s Travels to New York City

Evan Stephens liked to travel and many times journeyed to New York or the West Coast to enjoy the musical performances there.³¹¹ Quinn holds that “whenever Stephens took a long trip, he traveled with a younger male companion, usually unmarried” (p. 236). This is not exactly true, for we are aware of several journeys he took alone.³¹² On one occasion he traveled with his niece, when she went to study at the University of California.³¹³ Indeed,

³⁰⁹ Ibid.
³¹⁰ Evan Stephens to Samuel B. Mitton, 10 October 1923. Photocopy in our possession.
³¹¹ “Prof. Stephens Dilates on Coast Climate and San Francisco Music,” Deseret Evening News, 6 July 1918, sec. 3, p. 3.
on another trip while traveling to New York alone, he showed his enjoyment of feminine companionship, when he chanced to meet a woman from Utah on the train: “I was right glad to find that my good friend... had had the good judgment and taste to take the same train, and we enjoyed some interesting chats in our journey across the continent.” Similarly, in New York, “on my way to the oratorio, whom should I meet but our own Lucy Gates just arrived from home, looking as fine as I ever saw her. We are only a few blocks apart and I hope to see her often.” Quinn demonstrates a very mistaken view of Stephens.

Nevertheless, Stephens did not like to travel alone and often traveled with men. He also often traveled with Sarah Daniels, frequently accompanied by two married couples or more, as shown in his photojournal. This was only proper etiquette for a bachelor. He also saw travel as an educational experience for the young men or young women. After a trip to California to arrange for a tour of the Tabernacle Choir, Stephens said he “had the very pleasant companionship of one of my coming singers, Mr. Noel Pratt, who helped me in many ways, but most of all in witnessing the delight an enthusiastic young person feels in seeing the wonders of the western coast for the first time.” As usual on this trip, Stephens arranged a busy schedule of operas and theatricals. In his trips to the East to attend musical performances, Stephens maintained a very heavy schedule, writing perceptive descriptions and critiques to the newspaper at home. In reviewing published letters, Quinn displays poor judgment when he sees homosexual allusions everywhere he looks. The common terms and expressions of Stephens’s day take on a special meaning for him. Doubtless Stephens’s honest simplicity and forthright manner concerning

315 Internationally famous soprano from Utah.
317 Perhaps Quinn will be corrected by Stephens’s phrenological reading: “He is capable of very strong affection, is fully alive to the charms of the gentler sex, will be gallant in his deportment towards them, and if he had children would be apt to spoil them with over indulgence.” Pyper, “Something about Evan Stephens,” 495.
318 “Stephens Home from California,” Deseret Evening News, 6 November 1902, 1.
such matters leave him vulnerable to Quinn’s “specialized” manner of interpretation. In reality, an exemplary innocence is reflected in Stephens’s delightful writings. It would never have occurred to his contemporaries that someone would try to interpret his words in the way Quinn seeks to do.

An example of Quinn’s technique comes from his discussion of a letter from 1916, when Stephens wrote for the Deseret News a long and remarkable description of the musical scene from “Gay New York.” Quinn quotes this in a way to imply this was Stephens’s term, but again it was not. Instead it was the headline writer in Salt Lake City who used the term gay, not Stephens. Yet it was an apt word to use for the musical events described in the basic sense of gay, which then had no homosexual connotations. Quinn apparently thinks that the reader will assume that it did, and thus put a color on the whole article that was never intended at the time. “Gay New York” has been a tedious cliché, at least since the 1896 Broadway musical “In Gay New York” with its title song. It comes from a period known to all as the “Gay Nineties,” and certainly not because it was a homosexual heyday. Quinn, however, incorrectly uses the term to launch into another lurid but irrelevant sexual discussion.

As we have seen, Quinn thinks it important that Evan Stephens’s hotel in New York was within a few blocks of a former homosexual bathhouse that was raided and closed many years earlier (p. 256 n. 59). What has this to do with Stephens? The hotel was probably near trash cans also, but that does not mean that he rummaged in them. Stephens has left his own explanation of his hotel choice. It was “clean and quiet, and within a block of the most beautiful park on the earth, Central Park . . . [and] also within a 20 minute walk of the center of theatricals and even

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320 Webster’s Word Histories (Springfield, Mass.: Merriam-Webster, 1989), 90.
322 “No one has questioned . . . the fitness of gay nineties as a tag for the fashions of the decade with their frills and furbelows.” American Speech 26/3 (October 1951): 227.
nearer to the high musical halls where I expect to study."323 Quinn’s discussion again just creates another false impression.

In the same way, Quinn would also destroy Stephens’s memory of Central Park. The visiting Utahn wrote:

Broadway touches the opposite corner of the park of which I am as regular a patron as the sheep and goats grazing on its grassy dales or the geese and swans that grace its dozens of ponds and lakes. There I spend hours walking from one end to the other—or sitting reading the war news, sometimes in a shady nook, sometimes in a sunny one, for you never know which you may have in New York. Cold and heat play hide and seek here.324

This pastoral image is shattered with Quinn’s jarring claim that a simple stroll through Central Park becomes “homosexual ‘cruising’” (p. 257 n. 60)—a false claim when the entire passage is read in context. In order to show the absurdity of Quinn’s assertion, we quote from Stephens’s letter to the newspaper sufficient to give a feel for the context, again showing Quinn’s quoted excerpt in italics. The Deseret News headline writer mentioned above subtitled this section of the letter “Poetic Thoughts.” We give the passage in full.

The great open sea! The sight of land again, the thrill of it all, the joys of meetings, the pains of partings—all seem to rush upon one as he gazes out at a nearing steamer or follows into the dim “open distance” some departing vessel. The deck upon which I stand is only that of an ugly ferry, but these associations make me learn to love it as I do a lovely garden. It is like standing upon a firm, though floating, pedestal with the whole great wide wonderful world laid out before me, and I feel like shouting out to it, “O, beautiful earth! How I love the great home God has created for his creatures and his children! If only strife, pain and

323 “Prof. Stephens in New York.”
324 Ibid.
death were no more in it, as at first, how blessed it would be to roam over its surface forever more!"

My musical friends must pardon me. I would not be giving a correct report to you if I did not acknowledge that these nature treats are a source of even greater pleasure to me out here than those supplied by the numerous musical treats I enjoy. Indeed, I find that music and art are only a personal, more or less imperfect expression of the emotions awakened by nature, and the pleasure we derive from seeing or hearing is to a degree but the renewal of similar feelings created some time or other by nature herself, perhaps away back in our childhood.

You see the park has widened out into ocean and country, but it is still true to Central park. It is a miniature picture of the whole of things, ocean, mountains and humans, of all descriptions, so I still love it and its flotsam of lonely souls—like myself—who wander into its retreats for some sort of companionship—the squirrels, if nothing better, and to commune with nature. So I am still numbered among its "tramps."325

Quinn expects readers to believe this is "a description of the common practice of seeking same-sex intimacy with strangers in Central Park" (p. 239, 428), suggesting that Stephens, a most respectable fellow, would be involved in such a degrading and promiscuous practice. The full text of Stephens's remarks does not support Quinn's claim. Quinn provides no evidence of "homosexuals" hunting for companions in Central Park in 1916. It is certainly possible, and one may imagine some sought adulterous heterosexual relationships as well, but such activities do not preclude an innocent stroll in the park by devout persons having disciplined strict Christian morals—who also love to commune with nature. And why should Stephens be lonely, when he is so near "the love of his life?" Again Quinn is "overwhelmed" with his own imagination.

325 "Stephens Writes of Musical Events in Gay New York."
The Real Evan Stephens

Quinn’s treatment of Evan Stephens and his friends is simply reprehensible; nothing more can be said on the matter. When examined in detail and in context, none of Quinn’s so-called “evidence”—actually reading between the lines—holds up. The large treasure of Stephens’s wonderful and worshipful music and poetry alone witnesses the falsity of Quinn’s claims. It is the undeniable witness of his life’s work, and of his evident interests and purposes. Quinn has given us no reason whatever to believe that his life was not equally pure and chaste and in full accord with Mormon moral standards. Stephens provides a model of conduct for the single Latter-day Saint today—making the best of his situation and leading a chaste and exemplary life of service and piety.

Contemporary commentators praise Stephens for his positive influence and assistance. Harold H. Jensen, who knew Stephens and his youthful friends, was “one of numerous boys Professor Stephens’ influence and life inspired to greater ambition.” Jensen said that “great he was in stature, music and in heart. Few had the sympathetic understanding of youth as did he. Although . . . father of none he was father to all.” He further indicated that “many boys would never have fulfilled missions [for the church] had it not been for the help of this man.”326 J. Spencer Cornwall remembered that “Professor Stephens loved the youth of Zion. He was companionable with them and did much for those who came within his charmed circle. The song [“True to the Faith”] was his spiritual advice to them.”327

Representative of what the Brethren thought of Stephens is the praise from Elder John A. Widtsoe, prominent Latter-day Saint educator and apostle, who knew him for many years in both academic and church circles: “A lovable character . . . kind, tolerant, generous, a true friend who practiced the obligations of friendship.” Note the emphasis again on the importance of friendship to Stephens. “He loved to seek out young men and become their helper and, as it were, their second father. As he did not live for

glory, these numerous acts of God-like charity shall never be known . . . He was grateful for goodness shown him, but music, friendship and the vision of the eternal plan of life brought happiness into his life.”

**Consistency of Church Teachings on Homosexuality**

Implicitly and explicitly Quinn advances his notion that early Mormonism was soft on homosexual conduct and that the Brethren have recently, in his words, “departed significantly from the view of LDS leaders in the nineteenth century, when homoerotic activities were clearly regarded as far less serious than adultery” (p. 376). Quinn further says that they “could find no early Mormon leader to quote against homosexuality or homoerotic behaviors” (p. 375). His statements simply are not true. Quinn’s separation here of “homoerotic activities” and adultery is a fundamental error as far as the Latter-day Saints are concerned. The Saints consider that expression nothing but a glib euphemism for homosexual adultery. Such “activities” are seen as a form of adultery and proscribed by every scripture and sermon touching on adultery. Joseph Smith received by revelation an unyielding reaffirmation of the biblical teachings: “Thou shalt not steal; neither commit adultery, nor kill, nor do anything like unto it” (D&C 59:6).

Much of Latter-day Saint doctrine on the subject derives from strong biblical passages, which latter-day revelations support. The early Latter-day Saints found added confirmation of doctrines in the Bible and were devout believers in it. Orson Spencer, an early convert, wrote in 1842 to his former minister explaining his conversion: “What could I do? Truth had taken possession of my mind—plain, simple, Bible truth.” The Bible has many strongly worded passages proscribing homosexual adultery or stressing the gravity of that sin.

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330 See the following biblical citations in context: Genesis 13:13; 18:20; 19:5; Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Deuteronomy 23:17; 29:23; 32:32; Judges
of these passages? In his inspired review of the Bible, Joseph did not soften any of them. The Prophet either left them unchanged or strengthened them. As an example, we offer what is probably the strongest passage on homosexuality in the Bible, which comes from the New Testament. We give the King James translation, with Joseph’s addition to it in italicized type:

Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves: who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: and likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet. And even as they did not like to retain God according to some knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient; being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: and some who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, are inexcusable, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. (Romans 1:24–32)

This is a powerful reaffirmation by Joseph Smith of the biblical position on homosexuality, and the Church of Jesus Christ of
Latter-day Saints has continually maintained that faithful and un­waver ing position and does so at the present time. In 1834, the Prophet Joseph Smith warned Latter-day Saints to avoid "vices of great enormity" practiced by immoral persons, "men giving themselves up to commit acts of the foulest kind, and deeds of the blackest dye," which include "immorality" and the "loss of natural affection."331

Another early example comes from 1836 and appeared in the church periodical the *Messenger and Advocate*, commenting on the teachings of St. Paul at 1 Corinthians 6:9–10:

Now that his brethren need not be ignorant of what was righteous and what was unrighteous, he particularizes thus, be not deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the kingdom of God. This is language altogether too plain to need comment. Any argument, to either evade or enforce it, is entirely superfluous. We can no more evade it than we can do away a self-evident fact by sophistry: it still tells against the perpetrators of all such crimes, and sounds the knell of departed peace incessantly in their ears. Although such characters may be surrounded with the temporal blessings of a bountiful providence, and riot in voluptuous ease, they are destitute of that peace, that comforter, that leads into all truth, and if we are destitute of that, we have not the spirit of Christ, and if we have not the spirit of Christ, it is plainly said, we are none of his.332

It is remarkable that the Brethren discussed sodomy as much as they did, since the incidence of homosexual transgression found in the historical documents has been very low until recently. Quinn could find none until John C. Bennett in 1842, and even this case is conjectural. After that, the next one was thirty-four years later (p. 362). Often the Brethren mentioned it in the

332 *Messenger and Advocate* 2/12 (September 1836): 376.
context of their observations while on missions to the East or to Europe, urging that such conduct not find its way among the Latter-day Saints. An 1882 sermon of John Taylor illustrates this:

We know the infamies which exist there, the licentiousness, the corruption, the social evil, adulteries, fornication, sodomy, child murder, and every kind of infamy. And they come here and want to teach our children these things. We have got to be careful how we guard our homes, our firesides, our wives, our sons and daughters, from their association. We don’t want these practices insidiously introduced among us. We want to preserve our purity, our virtue, our honor, and our integrity.333

Quinn admits that he has “found relatively few instances of homoerotic activities among Mormons born before 1900” (p. 334). He claims that must be because there was an “unwillingness or inability of early Mormons to recognize homoerotic behaviors” (p. 335), a claim which again belies his basic notion that they were more tolerant then. In what the London Times reviewer refers to kindly as a “dubious extrapolation,”334 Quinn tries to work back from recent surveys to claim there must have been at least 400 times more instances in the past that were not recorded (p. 334)! This is, of course, absurd, and a very poor attempt at social history.

In recent years, there has been a growing concern regarding sexual transgressions of all kinds. Quinn’s final chapter is largely anecdotal, designed to make church leadership appear to temporize or to treat homosexual sins in an uneven way during this period. His evidence is far too limited to be useful, and what he presents is undoubtedly a selection reflecting his own homosexual bias. Appropriately, the church tries to treat these disciplinary

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333 Journal of Discourses, 23:269 (8 October 1882), emphasis added. See also the extended discussion by Elder Parley P. Pratt, reviewing basic doctrine on this subject, in “Heirship and Priesthood,” Journal of Discourses, 1:258–59 (10 April 1853). Pratt speaks of “unnatural lusts, appetites, and passions,” and undoubtedly represents here the doctrinal views of Joseph Smith and Brigham Young.

problems in the confidence that concerned members have a right to expect; consequently the few items of correspondence or examples of conversations he has been able to adduce, and from which he has made a selection for his own purpose, can scarcely be considered definitive. All along there would have been considerably more discussion entirely unknown to him. Many of these deliberations would have occurred at the local level. Responsible officers have always been taught to be prayerful and seek the guidance of the Spirit in such matters, and no two cases are exactly alike.

Conspicuously absent from Quinn’s discussion is the basic purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to encourage repentance and regeneration, and to bring about greater peace in the lives of its members and families in harmony with God’s law. This is the primary consideration, but one does not learn it from Quinn. It is not edifying to ridicule the efforts of those who are trying to help others overcome their problems. The case of Patriarch Joseph F. Smith II is instructive (pp. 369–71).335 When Smith developed homosexual problems, he was treated with compassion. Quinn almost appears disappointed that Smith was not excommunicated, but was considered ill and in need of rest. By Quinn’s own evidence, it is likely that the medical authorities considered Smith ill and made recommendations in accord with that diagnosis at the time (p. 389 n. 30). The point is that Smith was willing to overcome his problems, and he did. The same compassionate encouragement is available now to those who will make an effort to free themselves from their compulsions and to improve and bless their lives and the lives of their families according to the doctrines, practices, and covenants of God.

Faced with a growing onslaught against marriage and the family, of which homosexual militancy is a part, the present position of church leaders is far from reflecting a “descent into homophobia.” This is a “big lie.” This position reflects a determination to stay the course and adhere to the scriptures and com-

mandments as they have been understood and taught under the authority of the leaders of the church from the beginning.\textsuperscript{336}

**Conclusion**

Quinn’s agenda-driven history is written from a homosexual point of view. It reflects a sexual preoccupation contrary to his Latter-day Saint background and represents a complete break with his Mormon past. Quinn’s book is an attempt to rewrite Latter-day Saint history in his own image accompanying his movement from authentic, traditional Latter-day Saint values to homosexual activism. While published by a university press, Quinn’s book is in fact an anti-Mormon book, displaying much of the spirit and purpose of the dishonest and lurid “exposés” of the past. It is a form of persecution and a gross imposition on the Latter-day Saints. His book is neither successful Mormon history nor homosexual/lesbian history nor even social history. Much of it is pure fabrication.

When *Dialogue* published Quinn’s first article justifying homosexual conduct, we and others contacted the University of Illinois Press, pointing out in detail many of the problems we found in his initial essay. We urged the publisher of *Same-Sex Dynamics* to check carefully all of Quinn’s endnotes and to question some of his interpretations prior to publishing his book. These recommendations were rejected. Richard Wentworth, director of the University of Illinois Press, insisted that

The point of the book, as I understand it, is that same-sex relationships, whether or not they may have involved homosexuality, were not frowned upon in the nineteenth century as they tend to be at the present time. . . . It needs to be remembered that homosexuality is not a sin or a crime. . . . It is unfortunate that many of the Church of the Latter-Day Saints [sic] consider homosexuality a shameful thing. I believe that

this is something Professor Quinn, himself a homosexual, is attempting to dispute.\textsuperscript{337}

In this response to us, Wentworth explained his editorial viewpoint and also set forth his reading of Quinn’s motives, biases, and political agenda, none of which are explained in the book, nor in the publicity about the book put out by the University of Illinois Press. Wentworth may not have been aware of Quinn’s secretive-ness about his homosexual passion and hence may not have known that Quinn had not previously publicly acknowledged his homosexual interests. Wentworth’s letter indicated that a copy went to Quinn. This may have led Quinn finally to explain himself by revealing to homosexual activist Michelangelo Signorile that he is “gay.” Quinn told Signorile that he was once married and had four children, and hence he feels that he is “part of a complicated interaction.”\textsuperscript{338} Thus in August 1996 he finally put an end to speculation by confirming rumors that had circulated for many years, announcing publicly that he does not “define [himself] as ‘bisexual’” because he does not “have an equal attraction to both genders.” Instead, Quinn said in an interview with Signorile, which appeared in a New York City homosexual magazine called Out, that he is “overwhelmingly attracted to men.”\textsuperscript{339} Quinn later acknowledged to the media in Utah that, though he had been married eighteen years, he had known he was “gay” since the age of twelve.\textsuperscript{340} This may help us to understand some of his recent revisionist Mormon history, and his reasons for writing Same-Sex Dynamics.

Quinn’s book gives a deeply misleading impression of Latter-day Saint history. It is tendentious and inaccurate and misrepresents the lives and teachings of prominent Latter-day Saints, trying to make them appear soft on what they understand to be homo-

\textsuperscript{337} Letter from Richard L. Wentworth, Director and Editor-in-Chief, University of Illinois Press, to George L. Mitton, 31 May 1996.
\textsuperscript{339} Ibid.
sexual sin. Quinn employs confused language, takes material out of context and uses suggestion, insinuation, and innuendo to create false ideas about Latter-day Saints, all in an attempt to make the current leadership of the church appear out of harmony with past leaders. The book would corrupt the understanding of LDS history in a way persons in the past would never have intended or envisaged. In our view, Quinn’s work in *Same-Sex Dynamics* amounts to an utter misuse of the academic training he has received. Surely the methodology revealed here points to the need for great caution in approaching his other works, demanding careful scrutiny of his notes and conclusions.

Furthermore, Quinn’s book is a great disservice to those seeking to reform their lives, engendering confusion about the church’s moral teachings and providing no incentive to change. The book in no way helps the transgressor to find the strength to overcome sexual sin or to avoid temptation. We also see it as a contribution to the corruption of moral thought, seeking to make what was once shocking and repellent become commonplace in our thinking and conversation.

Reviewed by John A. Tvedtnes

Nothing New under the Sun

Although asked by the editor to do so, I was not really sure if this book was worth reviewing. Some people would not even call it a book. It comprises a self-published collection of photocopied sheets with a paper cover decorated with what has to be the strangest depiction of Joseph Smith I have ever seen. Floating in the air over the tabernacle of Moses, Joseph is holding the Salt Lake Temple—which was not constructed until long after his death—in his arms. It is difficult to describe the look on his face, with his eyes directed to his far right, though it makes me think that he is frightened of something.

It will come as little surprise to most readers that this book contains no new information. It is a simple rehash of old arguments, almost all of which have long ago been refuted. But unlike the authors of some anti-Mormon books, this author has at least a basic command of the English language and most of his book is well written. I was, however, disappointed with the large amount of redundancy. For example, he repeats the same quotation from Orson Pratt’s Divine Authenticity of the Book of Mormon on pages 8–9, 27, and on the back cover. After quoting from Joseph Fielding Smith’s Doctrines of Salvation, 1:188, on p. 106, he repeats that quotation a few pages later (p. 111). His argument on pages 177–78 for the rejection of Sunday as the appropriate Sabbath, including the quotation from Romans 3:3–6, is essentially repeated on page 204. Similarly, his contrast of biblical and Latter-day Saint teachings about salvation found on pages 143–44 is repeated on pages 166–68, including the same scriptural quotations.
On the first page of the book, the author writes, "God was already answering my prayer even before I had prayed it—as you will see later in this book." After just four more lines, he repeats the same idea: "God heard my sincere prayer for guidance. He began answering it, in fact, before I even prayed it!" (p. 8). Soon thereafter he writes,

I have numerous Mormon relatives and friends. There are more than six hundred relatives on my mother's side alone, many of whom are practicing Mormons. So you can readily understand my genuine love and concern for Mormons individually and as an organization. (p. 8)

But then he feels impelled to repeat the idea only four pages later:

I have a high degree of respect and a great amount of love for those in the Mormon church. In that church, I have many good friends, schoolmates, and relatives—more than 600 first, second, and third cousins on my mother's side are Latter-Day Saints! My purpose in discussing Mormons and their religion is based on my love—and respect—for those in that church. (p. 12)

To paraphrase Shakespeare, Methinks the gentleman doth protest too much.

Despite the fact that the author acknowledges, "I do not expect my dear Mormon friends who are reading this chapter, to agree with me" (p. 27), he nevertheless gave the book a subtitle, "The Book for Mormons." Somehow, it seems a waste to produce a book for an audience who will not like what one has written. The subtitle notwithstanding, the words "Meeting the Mormon Challenge" suggest confrontation. To lessen the impact, the words "with Love" have been added, perhaps patterned on other anti-Mormon books such as Ed Decker's To Moroni with Love and Mark J. Cares's Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons.

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1 This sounds like a textbook example of Rule 5 from Hugh W. Nibley, "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book (A Handbook for Beginners)," in Tinkling Symbols and Sounding Brass (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 479–80.
I must agree with Cornforth in his assessment of the LDS reaction to his book. We will not always agree with him, for he is often wrong when he defines the teachings of the LDS Church. No surprise here, though; his background in the subject is minimal at best. He acknowledges that, while his father was a Seventh-day Adventist, his mother was LDS, adding that “once in a while, Mom would take us to church with her . . . but she didn’t attend regularly” (p. 7). He says, “I grew up thinking Mormon teaching was the gospel” (pp. 7–8), and then hastens to add that “I was never baptized as a Mormon” (p. 12). He further explains that “we didn’t have prayer in our house; we didn’t study the Bible in our house. We didn’t discuss anything religious in our house” (p. 7). Little wonder, then, that when his family decided to begin regular attendance with the Adventists, he gained a love for the Bible and its teachings. Ultimately, he “became an ordained minister of the Seventh-day Adventist Church” (pp. 12, 160). The cover of his book indicates that it was written “by Elder Leon Cornforth.” I can’t help but think that he used this title to appeal to Latter-day Saint readers.

Having acknowledged his earlier unacquaintance with the LDS religion, Cornforth goes on to note that he spent “fifty-five years of careful study of [the LDS Church’s] claims and the circumstances surrounding its origin” (p. 27). After that long, one would think that he would know how to spell “Jeredites” correctly (p. 17) or that Joseph Smith did not claim to translate the Book of Mormon using “silver translating stones” (p. 17); the Book of Mormon did not consist of “14 characters inscribed on the gold plates” (p. 14); Joseph Smith was fourteen years of age (not fifteen) in the spring of 1820 (p. 13); or the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints does not have a “vice president” (p. 41). How did he conclude, from LDS sources, that the restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood took place “in May 1829 (or perhaps 1831, the date is in question even by Mormons)” (p. 14, repeated on p. 152)? I also wonder how his “careful study” could have brought him to suggest that the “unique history [of the Latter-day Saints], with its record of sufferings and persecutions, have [sic] welded the Mormons together as a people” (p. 15). Since very few of today’s Latter-day Saints went through persecutions and since the vast majority of the church’s ten million members
are converts, it seems to me that something else welds us together. May I be so bold as to suggest that it is our faith, our testimonies?

Moreover, Cornforth is not even up-to-date on matters regarding the LDS scriptures. He declares that, "with the exception of the final chapter, Doctrine and Covenants contains revelations said to have been given to Joseph Smith. . . . The last chapter of the book is a revelation given through Brigham Young" (p. 18). He obviously hasn’t looked at the book since 1981, when two additional revelations were added, one of them from Joseph F. Smith. He notes that “current versions of the book include President Wilford Woodruff’s 1890 manifesto [Official Declaration I] prohibiting polygamy” (p. 18), but does not mention Official Declaration 2, based on a revelation given to Spencer W. Kimball in 1978—two decades ago. All this points to one more fact, that Cornforth is, in reality, using previously published criticisms of the LDS Church and its scriptures. His “fifty-five years of careful study” boil down to a study of anti-Mormon literature, not of Latter-day Saint writings.

Cornforth’s ignorance of Latter-day Saint scriptures is further illustrated by the fact that he uses such references as “The Pearl of Great Price, 2:17,” “The Pearl of Great Price, 2:19” (both on p. 13), and “The Pearl of Great Price, 2:33–35” (p. 14) when, in fact, he is citing from Joseph Smith—History 1:17, 1:19, and 1:33–35, which is one of the four separate texts included in the Pearl of Great Price. He obviously hasn’t looked at a recent edition of that volume of scripture and doesn’t even use the pre-1981 editions, where the reference would have been “Joseph Smith 2” (“Extracts from the History of Joseph Smith, the Prophet”), while “Joseph Smith 1” was the prophet’s rendition of Matthew 24. But things get worse; rather than directly citing Article of Faith 8, Cornforth writes, “The Bible, Mormons teach, is ‘the word of God as far as it is translated correctly’” and gives, as his reference, “James E. Talmadge, A Study of the Articles of Faith, p. 236”—misspelling Talmage in the process (p. 17, repeated on p. 18).

But Cornforth is behind the times on a number of other issues. His unnumbered pages 57–104—more than a fifth of the book!—consist of a photocopied reproduction of Dee Jay Nelson’s 1968 The Joseph Smith Papyri, with Nelson’s signature on the cover.
Evidently, Cornforth is unaware (or unwilling to demonstrate awareness of the fact) that Nelson was discredited as an Egyptologist and lied about his academic credentials. Robert L. and Rosemary Brown exposed Nelson’s falsehoods in their 1982 book, *They Lie In Wait To Deceive*, volume I. In an 8 August 1968 letter to Jerald Tanner, who printed Nelson’s works, Egyptologist Klaus Baer wrote that “D. J. Nelson . . . needs more practice in late hieratic.” In another letter written to Tanner five days later, he wrote, “On the whole, I was not favorably impressed by Nelson’s work, not because he makes a lot of mistakes (who doesn’t?) but because he seems so convinced of the infallibility of his judgment.” In the same letter, he also wrote, “Nelson is not a skilled Egyptologist; I think he is the last person to accuse Nibley of a ‘superficial’ knowledge of Egyptian.”

But some real ironies are present in the case of Dee Jay Nelson. For example, in a letter addressed to Richley H. Crapo and me on 1 February 1969, Nelson expressed agreement with some of our positive findings about the book of Abraham, while disagreeing with others. He added, “Please bear in mind that I have never contended that J. Smith was unable to translate Egyptian (Reformed) but that, for reasons unknown to me and possibly quite innocent, he failed to translate ‘parts’ of the Book of Abraham correctly.” Commenting on one area where he found our assessment of Joseph Smith’s work to be “quite correct and most remarkable,” he added, “I made a note of the fact a few years ago. I can not explain it except to confess that J. Smith may have had some inner knowledge of the Egyptian written language.”

In a follow-up letter dated 9 March 1969, commenting on our defense of the book of Abraham, Nelson wrote, “What is still more important is that your work must surely please God. I set out

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2 I am grateful to Boyd Petersen for providing me photocopies of these letters, which are found in the collection of Baer’s papers held by the University of Chicago, where Baer taught. In the letter of 8 August, Baer, himself a non-Mormon, has a number of positive things to say about Hugh Nibley’s work on the book of Abraham.

3 In a follow-up letter dated 1 August 1969, he retracted his agreement on the basis that “only today I had an opportunity to study some large screen projected blow ups of the small Hor Sensen Fragment” that he felt explained how Joseph Smith had gotten some things right. However, he failed to address the fact that the prophet Joseph did not have the luxury of these blown-up images.
more than twenty years ago to prove Mormon Scriptures by scientific means. I wrote a very long manuscript (unpublished) which I called *The Nephite-Lamanite Place in History*. I believe it proves the Book of Mormon." Reading such words, one wonders who the real Dee Jay Nelson is—the one who left the LDS Church over the issue of the book of Abraham and then went about denouncing the church and its scriptures, or the one who, even after he had published materials critical of the book of Abraham, was claiming that his research proved the Book of Mormon. At the very least, it should prompt people on both sides of the issue to question his motives and his work.4

Much of Cornforth’s book repeals the standard anti-Mormon criticisms that have been countered and rebuffed time and time again: The Latter-day Saints don’t really believe the Bible. The Book of Mormon doesn’t have the kind of manuscript history the Bible does. There is no archaeological evidence for the Book of Mormon. There is no such thing as “reformed Egyptian.” The Book of Mormon was really authored by Solomon Spaulding. Joseph Smith’s prophecies all failed, proving he was a false prophet. The Mormons believe in salvation by works, while the Bible teaches salvation by grace alone.

But Cornforth’s approach includes elements with which other anti-Mormon critics would take exception. Most notable is the fact that Cornforth, as a Seventh-day Adventist, finds the Latter-day Saints to be in error because they worship on Sunday rather than Saturday (pp. 112–13, 185–89). Other Christians would also be uncomfortable with his criticism of the LDS belief in the continuing existence of the spirit after death (pp. 128–37)—something that is not accepted by the Adventists. His approach shows the problems inherent in trying to employ anti-Mormon rhetoric culled from evangelical circles and fit it into a Seventh-day Adventist mold.

4 At some point, I think we should publish not only Nelson’s letters, but those of the various Egyptologists who responded to both Nibley and others (many of these others were anti-Mormon writers). Boyd Petersen has performed a real service in amassing photocopies of the letters from the Egyptologists, some of whom, amazingly, come to Joseph Smith’s defense when writing to critics of the LDS Church. Not surprisingly, none of these critics ever acknowledged these supportive statements.
Sometimes, Cornforth seems at odds with himself. Though he stresses (incorrectly) the lack of evidence for priesthood ordination in the New Testament (pp. 154, 163–65), he notes that he himself is “an ordained minister” (pp. 12, 160). At one point, he writes that “the restoration of the seventh-day Sabbath is a major component of the restoration of the everlasting gospel in the last days” (p. 202), citing Revelation 14:6–7, despite the fact that he had already denounced the LDS view of a latter-day restoration necessitated by an apostasy (pp. 152–53). His own religious preference makes Cornforth agree on the importance of prophecy even in our day (pp. 107–9), though his prophet is Ellen White rather than Joseph Smith (pp. 120–26). He sees White, rather than Joseph Smith, as the instrument of a latter-day restoration (p. 120). Consequently, his chapters 11 (“The Sabbath and the Real Seal of God”) and 12 (“The True Church”) are written to convince his readers that the truth can be found in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. I cannot fault him for this, believing that all men are free to “worship how, where, or what they may” (Article of Faith 11). But it seems to me that if Cornforth’s goal is to convince people of the correctness of his religious beliefs, it would be better simply to give the evidence for those beliefs rather than pass on the false criticisms of the LDS faith that comprise most of the book.

While I was serving as a missionary in Geneva, Switzerland, a few members of the local Seventh-day Adventist congregation joined the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. This so enraged their minister that he immediately printed a book critical of the LDS faith, using (what else?) the same timeworn and unfounded arguments found in previous anti-Mormon literature. The effect was rather startling. Within weeks, several more members of his congregation were seeking out the LDS missionaries to set the record straight, and he lost more of his people. There is a lesson in this—a lesson that Mr. Cornforth should have learned before repeating the mistake.
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

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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-

"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-Mormon-
ism 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 de-
ceive, 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 ra-
dio 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."9

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.10 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.11 My fondness for DCRO, I must

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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 LDS 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 counter-cult 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,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 1993.14 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

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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{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.}

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
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 Schnoebe len is perhaps best known to Latter-day Saints as a close associate of J. Edward Decker, of The God Makers infamy. But Schnoebe len 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!" \(^{16}\)

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 Schnoebe len 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

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

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.

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 “sects.” 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.”26

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.”27 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,28 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.29 Evangelicals blasting away at the supposed false teachings of fellow evangelicals can be seen in the catalogs of ministries that operate mail-order bookstores.30
But Stafford also points out that "heresy can mean 'whatever you disagree with.' Let the gullible beware."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.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,"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

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32 Ibid., 22 (under a sidebar entitled "What Is Heresy?"))
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.” 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. 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.”

Walter Martin, of course, “was not the first of the cult watchers, but he was certainly the most prominent.” 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. 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

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.
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?  

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." 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."

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

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,” 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.

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.”

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.” 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, evangelical portion, over what he calls “the mind control model,” which “has never been accepted by those in the Sociological section” for rather obvious reasons. But “some Evangelical cult watchers have embraced it, e.g., Randy Watters, Craig Branch, and Ronald Enroth. Others adamantly oppose it, e.g., Gretchen Passantino, Eric Pement, and Frank Beckwith. In fact, Ronald Enroth, in his book Recovering from Churches That Abuse, claims that the evangelical church of which Pement is a member employs abusive techniques commonly cited by advocates of the mind control model.” Ibid.

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."76 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."77 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.78 (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 Gran­nee (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.81

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.” 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.” 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.” 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

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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.”

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.” 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.2

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.” 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, or to purchase a new

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." 96 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. 97 But in a few instances copies of an anti-Mormon book—sometimes highly disguised—have been mailed to Latter-day Saints. 98 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

McElveen’s role as an anti-Mormon publicist is suppressed by Larson and his publisher. This chapter, unlike everything that comes before it, is filled with evangelical rhetoric. Larson told me in a phone conversation that his publishers insisted that this language, with which he is not entirely comfortable, be included in his book.

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,

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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 agencies 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. 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 derivative—lifted from other literature—or entirely lacking in substance, originality, and documentation.

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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 DCRO. 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 publication 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 settings 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

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

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

(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 wrenched 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 polemicians 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. This is exactly the kind of blatant nonsense that fuels the bigotry business.

However, as I have shown, countercultists tend to grant that the liberals who are found within the mainline Protestant denominations 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 denominations 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 congregations 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 membership and influence, if not prestige. And the wealth, power, and influence of those in the new evangelicalisms, though not necessarily their prestige, are growing outside and perhaps even within the boundaries of the old denominations. The more radical

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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.”120 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.
loured 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

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,122 or Steve Van Nattan123 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

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, hold bars 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

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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.”
DCRO. 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. Nor is anti-Mormonism, with one or two exceptions, the work of Roman Catholics. 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.

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. 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

137 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.
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.

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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,\(^{141}\) vehemently denies that he is anti-Mormon.\(^{142}\) 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 *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.


\(^{142}\) In November 1996 *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 *Christianity Today* was “in error,” since “the term *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,’” *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 Unveiled*, 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-

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

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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.


146 Ibid.

147 Walter R. Martin, "The Maze of Mormonism," in Martin Speaks Out on the Cults (Ventura, Calif.: Vision House, 1983), 48. This essay is to be distinguished from Martin's book also entitled The Maze of Mormonism (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1962), rev. and enl. (Ventura, Calif.: Regal Books,
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 unwary soul than the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.” Hence, according to Martin, steps must be taken,

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., 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.”\footnote{Ibid.} 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.\footnote{Ibid.}

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.

\textbf{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.”\footnote{E-mail from Dennis Wright to Midgley, dated 21 March 1998.} Reverend Wright assures me that he intends to be one of these new moderates among evangelical
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 “sects.” 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.

Reviewed by Robert E. Lewis

More Installments in a "Ficto-Tract" Series about Book of Mormon Scholarship

In a 1992 review in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, Richard Cracroft gave mild praise for the story but questioned the underlying premise and value of a novel by Keith C. Terry (with Maurice R. Tanner), *Out of Darkness*. Cracroft termed this publication a "ficto-tract" for its attempt to present in the framework of a novel—"a form which is palatable to a larger reading public"—"the recent and remarkable textual discoveries about the Book of Mormon, findings which point up the authenticity of the book's antiquity and its divine origin and message." Cracroft suggested that Terry's approach was less than helpful in that readers might tend to find this "juxtaposition of fact and fiction"—this fictional conversion of a fictional protagonist based on literal facts—confusing and less compelling than might be desired.

Since that review was published, the original book has been repackaged and republished and two additional volumes, *Into the Light* and *The Remnant*, have appeared in what is now becoming a

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4. Ibid., 218.
ficto-tract saga built on a foundation of the progressive conversions to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints of members of the (fictitious) Stephen Thorn family. *Into the Light*, the second book in the series, continues in the same vein as the original, appearing to have the intent of entertaining and holding—even inspiring—the reader, along with highlighting the power of the Book of Mormon as a conversion tool and stimulating interest in (and informing readers about) recent physical evidences for the historicity of the Book of Mormon. The story brings some closure to the initial volume by detailing the struggles of Anney Thorn to come to terms with her husband’s conversion to the church. It also continues to provide a showcase for introducing additional scholarly findings about the origins of the Book of Mormon. The third volume is another matter, which I will address later.

**Overall Reactions to the Series**

While this is not heavyweight literature, I liked reading the first two books. In both cases, the story line held my attention, with enough twists and turns to keep me reading through most of a night.

Also, the lead characters are given some depth and dimension. Though fictional, the Book of Mormon conversions of Stephen Thorn in the first book and his wife Anney in the second seemed valid to me. Descriptions of these processes squared with my own experience with the Book of Mormon and seemed consistent in content and feeling with real-life Book of Mormon conversion stories recorded in such anthologies as those by Eugene England⁶ and Hartman and Connie Rector.⁷

A personal highlight for me in *Into the Light* was the point at which Stephen Thorn took the high road and forgave his televangelist father-in-law for a long litany of offenses. This first step to a family healing was portrayed sensitively and evenly. It gave the positive message that even persons with feet of clay can have some redeeming features and that a Latter-day Saint who is

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striving to be Christlike must rise above detractors, acknowledge values where they exist, and seek to enhance personal and family relationships when allowed.

I was also intrigued by the way in which the author wove in a side reference to the real-life work of Richard and Barbara Winder in the opening of missionary work in eastern Europe. (They are something of folk heroes in the area of Mormondom in which I live).

Copies of these books have recently circulated among members of my family and friends. One complaint made by several persons in my family is that the first two books in the series contained some PG-level marital intimacy that seemed gratuitous and inconsistent with the apparent purposes and audience for the book. Like me, however, these readers seemed to enjoy the story lines. But most significant, and consistent with Cracroft's earlier intimation, is that those who had little earlier experience reading FARMS publications and the like often found the sections describing scholarly evidences of Book of Mormon historicity to be confusing or disturbing. They simply did not know what to believe. This seemed to be at least partly the result of the indistinguishable line drawn by the authors between fact and fiction.

One of the ways this troublesome issue manifests itself is when the books fail to credit, or even obfuscate, the bases for the scholarly works that are being described and promoted. Sources are seldom documented—and then only in passing—by characters in the narrative. And one notes numerous oddities in attribution. Here are some examples. The (real) Warren and Michaela Aston are praised for their efforts to delineate Book of Mormon geography in the Arabian peninsula (Into the Light, pp. 19–20). As a BYU law professor whose name could not be remembered by the (fictitious) Stephen Thorn, John Welch (the real person) is acknowledged in The Remnant for his discovery of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon (see p. 144). However, in the chapter in Out of Darkness where chiasmus is highlighted, a fictional Dr. Saul from Hebrew University is Welch's alter ego, who voices Welch's findings. Richard Hauck (the real person) is credited with an archaeological discovery supporting the Mesoamerican model for

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8 Terry, Out of Darkness, 148–57.
Book of Mormon American geography, but credit for developing the model itself is not given to (the real) John Sorenson but to a team of (fictional) researchers under the hire of (the fictional) Dr. Polk (see p. 220). The pioneering work of (the real) Larsen, Rencher, and their associates, in their statistical studies of Book of Mormon wordprints, is attributed to (fictional) professors from Virginia Polytechnic Institute (although both Larsen and Rencher earned their Ph.D.s there) and the University of Southern California. In fact, in the chapter on wordprints,9 direct quotations are lifted word-for-word from a Larsen and Rencher publication on this subject10 and put into the mouths of the fictional professors, with no mention of the real source. A figure is even reproduced exactly from the published article without attribution.11

While I have no personal reading on the reactions of the LDS scholars whose works are quoted and copied without attribution and even assigned to fictitious authors, I felt some pain and embarrassment on their behalf. I assume they may experience some level of dismay, perhaps less from the lack of credit and more from having internalized the scholar's canon that responsible writers always leave a trail of verification that can be followed by others and from their work being made a part of something that falls so short of this ideal.

One further example illustrates my frustration. The Remnant features a statement that Sorenson supposedly has written about blood group evidence that ties Japanese, Polynesians, and Native Americans together and distinguishes these three groups from other Asiatics (see pp. 7–8). No source is provided. I assumed a real-life, factual source for the information, based on the apparent pattern in the earlier volumes. Because the concept was new and interesting to me and because the statement in the text seemed to present some ambiguities, I tried to find the original writings to

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9 Ibid., 249–60.
clarify for myself what had been said. After all, four paragraphs in quote marks are attributed to Sorenson. I own several of John Sorenson’s works and assumed he might be the Sorenson in question. I searched the indexes of these books and reread chapters that might in some manner have related to the topic of Native American origins. I then did an Infobases LDS Collectors Library search for anything (any) Sorenson had published in an LDS-related volume. None of these yielded any writings of any Sorenson on this subject. Then I did further Infobases word searches on variations of the words “blood group” and “blood type,” and found five references about American Indian blood types, none by Sorenson and none of which included Japanese or Polynesians in the comparison. I was left with only questions and frustrations: Is this particular evidence documented in some obscure or discredited place? Or is the report fictitious? How much can I trust the legitimacy of any description of physical evidences for Book of Mormon historicity provided in these novels?

For these books to have responsibly and accurately informed readers of findings and conclusions of recent Book of Mormon scholarship, extensive explanatory notes, at a minimum, would have been required. These books cry out for a hefty endnote section (at the end of the book or each chapter) or copious footnotes that accomplish two things: (1) clearly distinguish between what is fact and what is fiction in every instance where some scholarly work is introduced, and (2) make accurate attribution to each of these scholarly works. The latter seems especially critical in order to allow second-mile or skeptical readers to validate the assertions and to know where to go to deepen their understanding of the various topics. Without these aids, these books do not well serve the cause of faith and truth. At a meager best, readers might be motivated to try to inform themselves from more careful sources. At worst, good scholarship is tarnished by association with this less-than-exacting approach, and less-informed readers may become discouraged or cynical about the findings of legitimate Book of Mormon scholarship.12

12 The Remnant introduces a sketchy notes chapter, but still largely fails to provide needed references and explanations.
The Remnant

The story line of the third volume in the series, *The Remnant*, seemed weaker and the characterizations flatter. What is presented as Book of Mormon research, rather than the exacting if uncredited scholarship reported in the two earlier volumes, has a flavor of religious hobbying. Proof texts and leaps of faith are mixed in with a few snatches of facts and inferences. The thrust of this book seems to change from its predecessors to that of revealing some little-known meanings in the Book of Mormon, which most members, even General Authorities of the church, do not understand. At least a hint is evident of rebellious frustration and condescension toward church authorities and members failing to understand and give importance to these special truths (see pp. 145, 188).

The story line involves more of the Thorn family as a part of a small, select group of Latter-day Saints invited to join a yacht trip across the Pacific, to be exposed to a theory about the current existence of a nation of latter-day Nephites. Basic premises and conclusions underlying this theory appeared to be:

1. The major Book of Mormon promises to latter-day descendants of Lehi were reserved for the Nephite group (see p. 84), that is, descendants of his three righteous sons, Nephi, Jacob, and Joseph, along with Zoram's posterity. These promises include:
   - being a righteous and powerful nation in the day of the gentiles,
   - returning to America to claim their rightful inheritance, and
   - spearheading the creation of the New Jerusalem (see pp. 19, 84).

   These promises were not made to the descendants of the Lamanites. However, like any gentile, they might become heirs of these promises through adoption (baptism).

2. All the Nephites in America were destroyed by the Lamanites in the great battles in the fourth century A.D. Any not killed chose to become Lamanites. Thus Nephites no longer exist in America to fulfill the Book of Mormon prophecies for this lineage in the latter days (see pp. 86, 89).

3. Before the destruction of the Nephite nation, the Lord led away a Nephite remnant (see pp. 89–90) to provide a distinct
people and nation to fulfill these latter-day prophecies. The migrations undertaken under the leadership of Hagoth as recorded in Alma 63 are probably the basis for the establishment of this Nephite remnant.

4. Evidence exists that the Japanese nation (see p. 85, 223–27) was established by the people of Hagoth and represents the modern-day Nephites of prophecy.

Premise 1: Book of Mormon Promises Were Exclusive to the Nephites

Terry and Jarvis employ scriptural interpretations as a basis for argument on their first three premises. The first premise is founded on an interpretation of a Book of Mormon prophecy by Jacob, the brother of Nephi. The context is the lengthy oration of Jacob to his fellow Nephites recorded in 2 Nephi 6–10. In these discourses, Jacob focuses on the mission and atonement of Christ, the requirement for a righteous life, the history and future promises to the house of Israel, and the application of these promises to Jacob’s listeners. Jacob speaks of the last in this verse:

And behold how great the covenants of the Lord, and how great his condescensions unto the children of men; and because of his greatness, and his grace and mercy, he has promised unto us that our seed shall not utterly be destroyed, according to the flesh, but that he would preserve them; and in future generations they shall become a righteous branch unto the house of Israel. (2 Nephi 9:53)

Terry and Jarvis use this verse to argue that the term our seed applies strictly to descendants of Nephi and his righteous brothers Jacob, Joseph, and Sam; that the Lamanites are not the people of promise in the Book of Mormon. I believe that many Book of Mormon students would consider this to be too restrictive an interpretation. Although Jacob was speaking to a group that did not include Lamanites, the language in this section is remarkably similar to promises made to Lehi’s descendants as a whole and to all the descendants of Israel. In the latter-days, persons of this lineage would be scattered and afflicted by the gentiles, but the
gentiles would also bring to them the Book of Mormon and the fulness of the gospel. As a part of the larger latter-day gathering of Israel, this activity was likened to the gentiles carrying them in their arms, with kings being the nursing fathers and queens their nursing mothers (see Jacob 10:8–9; compare Isaiah 49:22–23). Prior to the separation of the Nephites and Lamanites, Nephi had applied these concepts to all the descendants of Lehi (see 1 Nephi 22:6–9). A more credible reading of this verse would appear to be that Jacob was reminding the Nephite people (after all, they constituted his audience) of the promises they inherited as elucidated by Isaiah and Lehi. This does not necessarily mean that other descendants of the patriarchs Jacob (Israel) or Lehi did not also share in these promises.

In further support of their premise that the Nephites were the people of promise in the Book of Mormon, Terry and Jarvis interpret references to promises made to the house of Jacob as referring to Jacob the brother of Nephi, not the ancient biblical patriarch. After citing Doctrine and Covenants 52:2, which speaks of a conference to be held “in Missouri, upon the land which I will consecrate unto my people, which are a remnant of Jacob,” Terry and Jarvis have their chief protagonist say, “When you read Jacob, here again it is the remnant of Jacob, the son of Lehi, that it has reference to” (p. 122; see 46–47 and 176–78 for more allusions to this idea). Statements in 3 Nephi 20:16; 21:12; 23:1 are interpreted similarly as applying to Lehi’s son Jacob. Again, most Book of Mormon students would interpret the reference to Jacob as meaning the Israelite patriarch, not Nephi’s brother, and that the house of Jacob refers to all of the first Jacob’s (Israel’s) descendants. 13

Even if one were to concede that these latter verses do refer to the Book of Mormon Jacob, they still hardly make a case for these prophecies to apply to the entire Nephite group. One might as readily conclude that descendants of Jacob’s brothers Nephi, Sam, and Joseph as well as the Zoramites were also excluded from the

promised blessings that were retained only by the Book of Mormon Jacob.

**Premise 2: No Nephites Remained in America**

According to the second premise, no Nephites remained on the American continent after the destructive wars of the third–fourth centuries A.D. The authors admit that Nephite stragglers remained alive by “coalescing with] Lamanite tribes” (p. 89), a point consistently held by a number of twentieth-century Book of Mormon scholars.14 Oddly, any descendants from these persons are not to be counted as Nephites in future fulfillment of prophecy, according to Terry and Jarvis. This seems a strange inconsistency: Literal descendants of Nephi in America, having lost their faith and joined the dominant Lamanite society, no longer qualify in any shape or form as Nephites, whereas literal descendants of Nephi living in some other part of the earth, such as Japan, having also acquired other belief systems and intermixed with local populations, remain Nephites. It appears that to support their point, the authors must selectively apply two differing criteria for what constitutes a Nephite—a cultural definition for those living in America and a biological criterion for Nephites elsewhere.

Since the focus of the authors’ assertion appears to be about biological lineage, I do not see the justification for excluding persons in America who are biological descendants of the Nephites from being a part of the fulfillment of whatever prophecies may pertain to Nephite descendants in the latter days.

**Premise 3: A Nephite Remnant Was Preserved in Another Land**

The third premise is that a righteous remnant of the Nephites was drawn away from the body of the Nephites to be preserved to

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fulfill the prophetic destiny of the Nephites. It is doubtful that any Book of Mormon believer would challenge the notion that some Nephites may have migrated to other locales, which could include other areas of the Americas, the Polynesian islands, or even Japan. However, the notion of a prophetically based need for the preservation of a Nephite remnant rests partially on dubious interpretations of the Book of Mormon scriptures discussed above. If all Lehi’s descendants share in the fulfillment of these Book of Mormon prophecies, or even if Nephite descendants are mixed in today in some Native American ancestry, the requirement for a separated Nephite remnant in the latter days is moot.

**Premise 4: Physical Evidence Supports the Japanese-Nephite Theory**

The fourth premise of *The Remnant* is that substantial physical evidence is beginning to be discovered, validating the proposed connection between the Nephites and the Japanese people of today. Terry and Jarvis summarize several findings, in the words of one of their major characters, to the effect that the evidences “strongly suggest that the Japanese people are actually descendants of the ancient Nephite civilization in the Americas” (p. 227).

I identified allusions in the book to seven possible physical evidences for this assertion:

- The timing of the establishment of the first emperor of Japan corresponds to the launching of Hagoth’s ships in 54 B.C., as recorded in the book of Alma (see Alma 58; p. 225).
- A possible correspondence may exist between early ceramic patterns found in Japan and in Ecuador (see p. 225).
- Parallels may be inferred between the Japanese emperors’ emblems of office—the mirror, the jewel, and the sword—with sacred Nephite relics—the Liahona, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban (see p. 226).
- A suggestion of correspondence of two royal names is made: The Japanese name for their country is *Nippon*, which may derive from the royal name of *Nephi*. Also, the Indochinese-Japanese *Hagata/Hakate* may derive from the name *Hagoth* (see pp. 20 and 225).
• Japanese blood types appear to be more similar to those of Polynesians and American Indians than to mainland Asians (pp. 7-9).

• The pattern of a Shinto relic seven-bladed sword is similar to a sword design in an ancient Peruvian depiction (see pp. 12, 14-15, 258-59).

• Traces of "Quiché Mayan" may appear in the Japanese language (see pp. 226-27).

Assuming the factuality and accuracy of the evidence cited (which assumption takes some stretching, given the general absence of source citations), the timing of the origination of the line of Japanese emperors to correspond with the Hagoth migrations does not really prove anything. It simply fails to rule out the proposed Nephite origin for the Japanese.

Possible correspondence between artifacts found in Japan with items from Peru (sword design) and Ecuador (ceramic pattern), does not make a good case for Japanese-Nephite origins, if one accepts a limited Mesoamerican model of Book of Mormon geography, as at least the senior author appears to do, based on evidence presented in Into the Light (see pp. 190-94). Neither Peru nor Ecuador would be even remotely a Nephite, or even Lehite, land under a limited Mesoamerican view.

The blood-typing comparisons, while presenting some interest, raise more questions than they provide answers. For example, why are Polynesian "Nephites" not given equal credence as members of the remnant of promise? And, is the sampling of American Indian blood types representative of Book of Mormon peoples as a comparison base? My inability to trace the source for these assertions hindered making a better assessment of the quality of this evidence.

Regarding evidence found in names, finding two similar name words across two languages is hardly breakthrough evidence for the common origins of two peoples.

The seven-bladed sword is held out by the major protagonists in the book as the premier evidence for the Japanese-Nephite connection. Terry and Jarvis propose that this relic is representative of the "seven tribes of Lehi," the tribes being Lamanites, Lemuelites, Ishmaelites, Nephites, Jacobites, Josephites, and Zoramites (see p. 259). The basis for the seven tribes being an icon for
Hagoth's travelers seems obscure to me. The authors elsewhere try to make the point that these émigrés are Nephites only, that is, coming from the four latter tribes. Following this logic, would it not be more reasonable for this people to memorialize the four tribes of Nephi in the sacred sword rather than include the Lamanitish tribes in their count?

For the assertion concerning possible Quiché-Mayan language bases for the Japanese language, the authors identify a specific source: "An author-scientist, James Churchward, writing in one of his books entitled Children of Mu, declared that the Japanese language still contained, in 1931, nearly forty percent Quiché Mayan words" (p. 226).

While on the surface this statement may appear to have some significance, at closer review the inclusion of this reference is a scholarly embarrassment. Churchward was an adventurer and mystic who wrote a number of books in the 1920s and early 1930s promoting a theory of the development of mankind from a hypothetical lost continent, Mu. According to Churchward, Mu was a large landmass covering much of the area now occupied by the Pacific Ocean. He propounded the theory that Mu sank into the sea cataclysmically about 12,000 years ago,\textsuperscript{15} destroying the "First Civilization" that existed there:


16 Churchward, The Children of Mu, 16.

On this great continent man made his advent on earth about two hundred thousand years ago.

The Land of Mu and the Biblical Garden of Eden were one and the same land.

At the time of Mu's destruction her people were in an exceedingly high state of civilization; as regards science she was far ahead of the present time.

The great civilizations of the old Oriental empires—India, Egypt, Babylonia, etc.—were the dying embers of Mu's great civilization.\textsuperscript{16}

Before the destruction of Mu, portions of the tribes occupying the Motherland began to migrate to the other continents. Ac-
cording to Churchward, one of the major tribal groups on Mu was the Quiché Mayas. Members of this group migrated to “Central America, South America, South Sea Islands and the Malay Islands.” The Malay group later migrated northward to become the Japanese people. Quoting from Churchward:

It is quite a popular belief, even among educated people, that the Japanese are Mongols—they are not. They are as distinct from a Mongol as a white man is from a black. They have descended from the Quiché Mayas of the Motherland, one of the white tribes. The Japanese language today embodies fully 40 per cent of Quiché-Maya words.

The Quiché Mayas were a hypothetical tribe living on Churchward’s speculative continent of Mu. Their connection to Mesoamerica even for Churchward was tangential—portions of the tribe went east and portions west. How he came to know their “mother” language on Mu 12,000 years ago sufficient to determine an exact ratio of the retention of the language by the Japanese today was unspecified and undocumented.

It is a great puzzle to me how this speculative statement of Churchward, contained in what is largely a nonscholarly work lacking factual substantiation, could be presented as serious evidence for the migration of Book of Mormon peoples to Japan.

Overall, factual evidence presented in The Remnant for the Japanese having Nephite origins seems to me much less than “strongly suggestive.” At best, this notion seems speculative and the factual evidence without particular substance.

But assuming for a moment the possible factuality of the premise of Nephite origins for the Japanese, this conclusion really does not require the labored interpretation of Book of Mormon passages to try to make these people the exclusive heirs of Book of Mormon promises. A less-strained interpretation would suggest that descendants of Lehi among Native Americans and Polynesians, along with possible Japanese descendants of adventurous

17 Ibid., 171.
18 Ibid., 242.
Nephite mariners, plus adopted gentiles of all stripes, could share in the fulfillment of these promises.

And now, one final comment on how Terry and Jarvis model advocacy for their Japanese-Nephite theory. The chief protagonists in the story seem to suggest that through their intense study of the Book of Mormon and their search for other evidences, they have learned some special "truths" not known or accepted by most members of the church, including its General Authorities. They pay considerable attention to justifying their extra efforts to find these "truths," for, after all, they have simply been exceptionally obedient to President Benson’s command to all church members to make the Book of Mormon a special object of study.

A conspiratorial flavor in their discussions gave me some discomfort and increased my skepticism regarding the conclusions drawn by the protagonists. They were holding a "close to top-secret meeting." It was "too sensitive for open sharing." They believed that "Church policy demanded that it not be discussed in open forum" and requested "everything discussed in this gathering to be private and confidential" (pp. 78-79). The perception of special truths possessed by a small set of persons who have gained their understandings through unusually diligent efforts and whose discussion of these insights must be carefully managed, especially in relation to church authorities, represents an attitude that has led more than one group of persons into dissident status and out of the church. I was not impressed that the approach to truth seeking modeled in this book was constructive for persons seeking either temporal or spiritual enlightenment.

The strident advocacy in *The Remnant* for what seems to me to be a tangential interpretation of the Book of Mormon makes this volume the weakest and least enjoyable of this series. In my view, this book detracts from whatever credibility the first two volumes may possess and further demeans the quality Book of Mormon scholarship that is referenced there.
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