2001

He Ain't Heavy

L. Ara Norwood

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation
Available at: https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/msr/vol13/iss1/10

This Mormon Studies is brought to you for free and open access by the Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011 by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.
Title  He Ain’t Heavy

Author(s)  L. Ara Norwood


ISSN  1099-9450 (print), 2168-3123 (online)

Historically, Mormons and evangelicals have often talked past each other, even on the rare occasions when they were actually trying to listen to one another. All that started to change with Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson’s book *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*. With this volume, the first of what I hope will be many publications of a similar tenor, Blomberg and Robinson (evangelical and LDS scholars, respectively) have demonstrated for the rest of us that it is possible to have a mature, hard-hitting, engaging, rigorous conversation that radiates much more light than heat. The second number of the 1999 *FARMS Review of Books* featured reviews of *How Wide the Divide?* including a lengthy essay by evangelical scholars Paul Owen and Carl Mosser, both responsible critics.

As always, I am grateful to friends and colleagues who have taken time to read an early draft of this review essay and make suggestions and comments, including Ross Baron, Alan Goff, Robert F. Smith, Kevin Barney, and Hermann Buenning. Of course, none of these gentlemen bears the blame for any errors that may be found in this published version. I alone am responsible for any deficiencies that remain.


Of course, not everyone is pleased with such developments in Mormon-evangelical relations. Evangelicals have published a number of books and articles denouncing the Blomberg-Robinson effort. The first number of the 2000 FARMS Review of Books featured detailed reviews of one of these books. This review essay responds to another. James R. White, in *Is the Mormon My Brother?* has opted to end the dialogue started by Blomberg and Robinson. However, his flawed understanding of the doctrine of the Latter-day Saints leaves him without the authority to do so.

After laying out the structure of White’s book, I will mention some of the problems with the book (both large and small). I will then respond to White’s central arguments that Mormons worship a different God and that they are guilty of polytheism, idol worship, and a misplaced belief in the doctrine of theosis. Finally, I will examine some of the implications of White’s decision to end further dialogue between evangelicals and Mormons.

Contents of White’s Book

The book contains twelve chapters, an appendix, twenty-six pages of endnotes, and a two-page subject index. The title of the opening chapter—“What Is a Mormon?”—is misleading because the chapter never attempts to address that question. Instead White uses this chapter to try to demonstrate that Mormonism is not a part of “Christianity” as he understands things. In a colloquial style, White points out that the Mormons his own children prefer to associate with are viewed by other people (presumably other Christians) as moral, trustworthy, studious, obedient to teachers, and “unwilling to engage in the wild behavior” in which many non-Mormon students participate (p. 16). However, White also explains that many other (unnamed) Christians see these same virtuous Mormons as being part of a “devil-inspired cult,” as “polygamous cultists,” as “out to destroy the souls of anyone unwary enough to be caught in their clutches,” and as “the

---

4. This doctrine is perhaps more appropriately called apotheosis.
very embodiment of evil itself” (p. 17). White wants to separate himself from these fellow Christian cult-watchers and take a fresh, seemingly unbiased, look at the Mormons to decide once and for all whether Mormonism falls within the pale of Christianity.

Chapter 2, “What Do Mormons Believe?” is perhaps the most interesting chapter of the entire book. Here we learn something of White’s assessment of LDS sources for doctrine. Although he betrays no knowledge of some of the more important publications on this topic, he does lead the reader in a reasonably valid discussion of the distinctions between the standard works and the living prophets and apostles as sources of authority. I was particularly impressed with the model he designed that delineates four levels (in descending order of clout) of LDS doctrinal sources of authority. White’s levels include: (1) the standard works and the living prophet; (2) Joseph Smith, statements by the First Presidency, and the doctrines revealed in the temple ceremonies; (3) books published under the authority of the First Presidency as well as statements made by General Authorities during general conference; and (4) other published statements of General Authorities. White also includes the Encyclopedia of Mormonism in this tier although it is not a publication by LDS General Authorities.

After inserting a brief, five-page summary of his views on monotheism (chapter 3, “Christian Orthodoxy”), White presents four chapters (covering seventy-five pages—almost 40 percent of the text proper) documenting from LDS sources what he concisely states in one paragraph in his summary:

Official Mormon teaching is clear. God and man are of the same species. The difference between them is a matter of

---

5. See, for example, J. Reuben Clark Jr., “When Are the Writings or Sermons of Church Leaders Entitled to the Claim of Scripture?” a speech delivered at BYU on 7 July 1954 and referenced in a number of LDS publications. I am indebted to Hermann Buenning, who directs the LDS Institute of Religion at UCLA, for reminding me of this source.

6. Such as the Melchizedek Priesthood study guides or various student manuals for religion classes taught at BYU and elsewhere.

7. Earlier, White had suggested that LDS doctrine was anything but clear: “As surprising as it might be, ... it is not as easy to answer [the question of what Mormons believe] as one might suppose” (p. 18).
exaltation and progression over aeons of time. God was once a man, a mortal, just as we are. He lived on another planet in a condition very similar to ours, and gained exaltation on the same principles that are made available to men today. The worthy Mormon man who is sealed for time and eternity to his wife in the LDS Temple and who continues faithful to the end in obedience to gospel ordinances and principles, will be exalted, in due time, to the status of a god. He will have “eternal increase,” beget spirit children, and be worshiped as a god and creator of other worlds. In those worlds he will raise up his spirit children so that they, too, might become exalted. This is the eternal law of progression, the concept of exaltation to godhood, and as we have seen over and over again, in Mormonism this is the gospel. That this is the LDS teaching cannot possibly be doubted. (p. 124)

On the basis of this pronouncement, White tries to answer the question of whether the Mormons can be thought of as “brothers” to other Christians. So in chapter 8, titled “The God Christians Worship,” White spends twenty-eight pages writing what sounds like a sermon denouncing LDS beliefs about God. All the usual proof texts are there: Deuteronomy 6:4 and Isaiah 43:10; 44:6–8; 45:5–7, 21–22; 46:9–10. All are used to show there is only one God and that Mormons are therefore wrong for acknowledging more than one God. Present also is the oft-quoted Deuteronomy 13:1–5, warning against false prophets (e.g., Joseph Smith). Of course, White turns to John 4:24 in an attempt to show that God is not corporeal and to Jeremiah 23:24 and 2 Chronicles 6:18 to demonstrate that God is omnipresent and

8. Although this summary is largely correct, White slips in the idea that Mormons believe they will be worshiped in their exalted state. He does this, not through the explicit LDS teachings from which he quotes, but through inference. Of the approximately 123 LDS sources he quotes when surveying the Mormon doctrine of God (see chaps. 4–7), not one makes any direct mention of Latter-day Saints being potential objects of worship. Indeed, in my own considerable experience in trying to understand normative LDS thought on these matters, I have never known any member of the church to entertain any expectation of being an object of worship in the eternities ahead. Thus his claims of fairly presenting the LDS position (see pp. 18, 19, 39, and 40) should perhaps be reassessed.
therefore lacking an anthropomorphic form. White also includes 1 Timothy 6:16 to show that God cannot be seen (and, therefore, that Joseph Smith did not see God). And finally, White uses Psalm 90:2 to indicate that God is everlasting and therefore never had a beginning.

Chapter 9, “Answers to Commonly Cited Passages,” follows; it appears to be a hastily written polemic, an attempt to counter what the author supposes are typical Latter-day Saint claims based on the scriptures. White attempts to refute LDS arguments based on John 10:30–36 (where Jesus quotes Psalm 82:6 to the effect that “ye are gods”). White also tries to downplay the implications of Acts 7:55–56, in which Stephen sees two personages in the Godhead, and attacks LDS interpretations of Acts 17:28–29 and Hebrews 12:9, both used to support the beliefs that we are the offspring of God and that God is the father of our spirits. Finally, he grants some attention to Latter-day Saint use of Romans 8:15–19; 2 Peter 1:3–4; and Revelation 3:21 (often cited in support of the LDS belief in apotheosis).

In chapter 10, “The Divide Is Very Wide,” White briefly explains why the Mormon is not his brother (nor the brother of any true Christian). In chapter 11, “How Wide the Divide?” he continues to criticize LDS scholar Stephen Robinson and his and Blomberg’s book bearing that same title. In chapter 12, “A Mormon Doctrine, or Mere Speculation?” White treats LDS views on the conception of Jesus, a theme quite out of place in a book that claims to focus on one issue alone: Is Mormonism monotheistic or polytheistic? The appendix, “Theosis—Becoming a God?” represents an attempt to nullify Latter-day Saint use

9. This critique actually started earlier in chapter 9 (see pp. 159–61).

10. White would have done well to consult the words of President Harold B. Lee on this matter: “Teachers should not speculate on the manner of Christ’s birth. We are very much concerned that some of our church teachers seem to be obsessed [with] the idea of teaching doctrine which cannot be substantiated and making comments beyond what the Lord has actually said. You asked about... the birth of the Savior. Never have I talked about sexual intercourse between Deity and the mother of the Savior... Remember that the being who was brought about by [Mary’s] conception was a divine personage. We need not question His method to accomplish His purposes.” The Teachings of Harold B. Lee, ed. Clyde J. Williams (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1996), 13–14.

11. White commits himself to his singular focus when he writes as follows: “Christianity is unabashedly monotheistic... What of Mormonism?... This is the issue that
of the patristic writers, who taught some form of the doctrine of deification. White attempts to show that the early church fathers did not share the LDS belief that God the Father once experienced mortality.

Problems in White’s Book

Of the numerous defects of this book (some serious and some less significant), here are a few that jumped out at me:

- Occasionally, White slips into hyperbole that may not be helpful to readers trying to understand Mormonism. For instance, he writes, “you will find as many different versions of Mormonism as you will find Mormons” (p. 24). One hopes that his more naive readers won’t infer from this that there are actually several million versions of Mormonism.

- I also found it a bit curious that White, when criticizing ideas found in the book How Wide the Divide? mentions only Robinson, even when Blomberg and Robinson coauthored a given passage in that book. For instance, after quoting Blomberg and Robinson’s “joint-conclusion” on the matter of the Trinity, White responds: “The main error made by Robinson in the above statements is this . . .” (p. 44). Perhaps White withholds criticism from those he considers his “brothers” regardless of how much he disagrees with them.

- White places his worldview within strictures that invariably lead to inconsistencies. For instance, he paints himself into a corner with these comments: “Truth is truth no matter when it is given. When God reveals truth ‘X’ about His nature and attributes, ‘X’ will not become ‘false’ tomorrow” (p. 41). All one must do here is remind White that the preincarnate Christ had no body of flesh and bones, while the resurrected Christ had both.12

---

12. Nor will it suffice for White to reply that the Savior’s change from noncorporeality to corporeality was really not a change since it was all part of a predetermined plan. That rationale applies just as well to the accusations White would levy at the Latter-day Saints.
In one of his many criticisms of Stephen Robinson, White uses faulty logic and ambiguous language. Robinson takes Genesis 1:26—in which God is said to have created Adam “in our image, according to our likeness”—literally and points out that most other Christians view the passage figuratively. A literal understanding of the passage suggests God has a physical image. White tries to refute this interpretation by quoting from a systematic theology by Protestant Bible scholar Wayne Grudem. But after scrutinizing Grudem’s quotation, I remain unpersuaded that White made his case. White continues (with my comments in brackets):

Man is the image bearer of God, but we have already seen that the God who makes man is not a man but is spirit. [White is not clear here; why would a dichotomy between “man” (as in male, not mortal) and “spirit” (as in spiritual) exist? Latter-day Saints do not maintain that God is a “man” except in the sense of possessing male, as opposed to female, gender.] Furthermore, whatever the image of God is [so White isn’t certain himself, but he’s just certain that God’s image cannot be whatever the Mormons believe it is], it separates man from the rest of creation, for only man has this image. [Exactly! So why cannot that image involve physical characteristics? White gives us no cogent reason.] An ape has a physical image [no argument here; so does an aardvark, as does a stag beetle] but not the image of God. [Correct. No Latter-day Saint claims apes are created in the image of God. But scripture affirms man is so created.] So the idea that the image has to do with corporeality, hence making God an exalted man, is without basis in the Genesis passage. (p. 151, emphasis in original)

Yet Robinson never mentions corporeality in his argument (although he surely believes God the Father is corporeal). Robinson merely points out that the Genesis passage can reasonably be understood to mean that God has a physical image. White’s counterargument does nothing to diffuse Robinson’s point; White also ignores
Genesis 5:3, which applies the same Hebrew term for image to human reproduction (cf. Acts 14:11).  

- On this same topic, White acknowledges that, for Latter-day Saints, a physical image does not necessarily mean a corporeal image of flesh and bones. White writes, “Smith plainly indicates that this is the Father speaking to the Son. However, at this point in time the Son did not have a physical body. . . . Hence, to get around this, the Mormon must say that the spirit body has a physical image as well, and it is this image that is meant. But as soon as it is admitted that the physical image could not be the focus of these words, the issue becomes moot” (p. 152, emphasis added). Yet one would be justified in asking, When have Mormons admitted that the focus of the words in Genesis 1:26 could not involve a physical image? We have made no such admission, contrary to White’s assertion. And the problems are compounded by White, who muddles the terms physical and corporeal in this argument; he acknowledges that Mormons see a potential distinction between the two terms, but he then proceeds to use the terms synonymously, thus compromising clarity. The seemingly circular reasoning of his argument causes it to lose much of its impact.

- Equally vague is White’s analysis of Stephen’s theophany in Acts 7. One problem with White’s attempts to thwart an LDS interpretation of Acts 7:55–56 is that White distinguishes between the theological terms person and being as they relate to Deity: “This passage is often used by LDS to prove that God and Jesus are two separate beings. . . . Of course, Christians believe that God the Father is a different Person than the Son. . . . But what of the idea that here you have two separate beings, two separate gods?” (p. 158, emphasis in original). If White is so astute an observer of the Church of Jesus Christ and its members, he should know that the average Mormon does not make a distinction between person and being. Mormons don’t gener-

ally use those terms with their metaphysical baggage the way evangelical scholars tend to do. Mormons believe that this passage merely teaches that Stephen saw both the Father and the Son.

A second problem here is the fact that White attributes to Mormons the belief that the Father and the Son, as seen by Stephen in Acts 7, should properly be called "gods" with a lowercase g. Yet Mormons never refer to the Father or the Son as "gods." Knowingly or unknowingly, White is ascribing beliefs to the Mormons they do not hold.14

Third, White repeats the common, rudimentary mistake with this passage that many anti-Mormons make: "Stephen does not say that he saw two gods. He saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God. Stephen did not see God the Father, he saw the Son" (pp. 158–59, emphasis in original). This statement betrays a careless reading of the biblical text, which itself contains three key phrases in verses 55 and 56 describing what Stephen saw. The first phrase (in v. 55) indeed indicates that Stephen saw the glory of God, meaning the glory of God the Father. The second phrase (also in v. 55) indicates that Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of God the Father. Note that the text does not indicate that Stephen saw Jesus standing on the right hand of the glory of God the Father (which seems to be James White's reading of the text—a good case of eisegesis). In the third phrase (in v. 56), Stephen claims to see the actual person of the Son of Man (i.e., Jesus Christ) standing on the right hand of God the Father. Clearly, the New Testament text reports that Stephen claimed to see two personages, not one personage plus another's glory. James White has misread this biblical text.15

14. The rare exception to this consistency is when a Latter-day Saint refers to Deity in a temporarily theoretical or impersonal manner. Elder Bruce R. McConkie used the term god in this sense during his last conference address. See Bruce R. McConkie, "The Purifying Power of Gethsemane," Ensign (May 1985): 9–10.

15. Some commentators, plagued by theological bias, support White's reading of the text. See, for example, Barclay M. Newman and Eugene A. Nida, A Translator's Handbook on the Acts of the Apostles (London: United Bible Societies, 1972), 167; and Simon J. Kistemaker, New Testament Commentary: Exposition of the Acts of the Apostles (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 278–79. It is interesting that Kistemaker does agree with the Mormons on one key point: The condemnation of the Jews came from their understanding that Stephen was claiming to see two Gods, which violated their grasp of monotheism.
• I find it somewhat self-assuming of James White to consider himself more informed on Mormonism than Mormons are. Thus he writes, “Over the years I’ve taken to carrying various works written by LDS General Authorities so that I can explain to Mormons what Mormonism has taught and continues to teach” (p. 23). As I will further demonstrate, James White has much to learn from Mormons about their religion.

• White also challenges Robinson’s use of New Testament scripture to bolster the LDS belief in deification. Again, though, White is careless. Robinson appeals to John 17:22–23 to demonstrate that true disciples can receive the glory of God. White quotes the passage and then writes, “Robinson uses this passage in the context of our receiving the glory of Christ and sitting upon the throne of God” (p. 161). Actually, Robinson did not mention sitting upon the throne of God in connection with John 17; Robinson got that idea from Revelation 3:21. This is a minor point, but it does underscore James White’s inattention to detail.

• At some points, White feeds his evangelical readership falsehoods, such as this: “One of the greatest truths about God that is utterly denied by LDS theology is God’s uniqueness” (p. 135, emphasis in original). Yet Latter-day Saints would willingly and consciously repeat the testimony of a special witness of the Savior: “I testify that He is utterly incomparable in what He is, what He knows, what He has accomplished, and what He has experienced.”

• A great example of bald assertion and circular reasoning occurs when White attempts to refute Latter-day Saint use of Romans 8:15–19, which essentially teaches that if we are heirs of salvation, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ and shall be glorified with Christ.


The argument is, "If we are joint heirs with Christ, then we receive everything Christ has. Since Christ is God, we receive godhood." But the passage speaks of our position as adopted children of God, not as children by nature, which would be required if the Father/child argument is to hold up. But on the level of receiving whatever Christ has, we again see a problem in that it assumes that Christ received Deity. He did not. The Son has eternally been God and did not enter into the state of being "God" at some point in time. Deity is not a possession to be transferred to fellow heirs. Receiving an inheritance does not change our being. When I receive an inheritance, it does not change me; it only changes my status. No matter how highly a human is exalted, he remains a human. And so we go back to the fundamental difference between Christianity and Mormonism: Christians accept God's statement that He has eternally been God, while Mormons reject this or redefine it out of existence. An exalted man is still a creature, while God is the Creator. (p. 162, emphasis in original)

I will now give a detailed analysis of White's rhetoric. First, he has restated the LDS position fairly accurately; Mormons do interpret Romans 8:15–19 to indicate that since Christ is Deity and since heirs of salvation will receive all that Christ has, their inheritance will include some sort of glorified, deified state of existence. However, White errs when he claims that Latter-day Saints believe Christ "received" Godhood (presumably after the resurrection). Unless I misunderstand his point, Latter-day Saints do, in fact, believe wholeheartedly that Christ was God prior to his incarnation.17

Then, as quoted above, White claims, "But the passage speaks of our position as adopted children of God, not as children by nature,.

17. Of the many references I could cite, one should suffice: "Jesus was a God in the premortal existence. . . . Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He came to this earth at a fore-appointed time through a royal birthright that preserved His godhood." Ezra Taft Benson, The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 6–7. Any other notions about how or when Christ received this status, however true such notions may turn out to be, fall within the realm of speculative theology; see n. 34 below.
which would be required if the Father/child argument is to hold up." This is an example of bald assertion. Latter-day Saints wholeheartedly agree with White that the passage in Romans 8 refers to our being children by adoption. No problem there. But White offers no evidence for his position that adopted children are unable to receive what Christ their Savior receives. If I rephrased the passage in question with the addition of the word *adopted* appearing before the word *children*, it would read:

The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the [adopted] children of God:

And if [adopted] children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together. (Romans 8:16-17)

Even when the word *adopted* is displayed prominently in the text, the LDS position remains unchanged. We firmly believe that as adopted children, those who are eventually exalted will be joint heirs with Christ, will receive his glory, and will thus be deified.

White further asserts, "Deity is not a possession to be transferred to fellow heirs." Again, White gives no evidence for this statement. Yet, as many sources (both LDS and non-LDS) indicate, strong evidence supports deification as a legitimate Christian doctrine. White may be compelled to reconsider in light of the following statement from a non-LDS source:

Deification (Greek *theosis*) is for Orthodoxy the goal of every Christian. Man, according to the Bible, is "made in the image and likeness of God" (cf. Gen. 1.26.), and the Fathers commonly distinguish between these two words. The image refers to man's reason and freedom, that which distinguishes him from the animals and makes him kin to God, while 'likeness' refers to 'assimilation to God through virtues' (St. John of Damascus). It is possible for man to become like God, to become deified, to become god by grace. This doctrine is based on many passages of both OT and NT (e.g. Ps. 82 [81].6; II Peter 1.4), and it is essentially the teaching both of St. Paul,
though he tends to use the language of filial adoption (cf. Rom. 8.9–17; Gal. 4.5–7), and the Fourth Gospel (cf. 17.21–23).18

White proclaims: “When I receive an inheritance, it does not change me; it only changes my status,” but he never explains what he means by this statement. He then suggests cryptically, “No matter how highly a human is exalted, he remains a human.” Perhaps if White had taken the time to define human, or even exalted human, we would be able to follow his point. I would also be delighted to have White clarify the distinctions he draws between the terms human and mortal. If White is trying to say that no matter what degree of exaltation a disciple obtains, that disciple will always remain subservient to God and Christ, then Mormons would agree wholeheartedly with him. But as his argument is currently worded, we are left to wonder what his point is.

White concludes his attempt to refute Latter-day Saint understanding of Romans 8:16–17 with the following: “And so we go back to the fundamental difference between Christianity and Mormonism: Christians accept God’s statement that He has eternally been God, while Mormons reject this or redefine it out of existence. An exalted man is still a creature, while God is the Creator.” How this last set of comments applies to the passage in Romans 8:16–17 is not clear. I submit that White has engaged in a non sequitur. Whether God has eternally been God is a worthwhile topic of discussion but not relevant to the issues associated with Romans 8:16–17. The issue under consideration with this passage is whether being joint heirs with Christ (and receiving his glory) implies deification; the passage has nothing whatever to do with ontological issues about God or the question of God’s “origins.”

- In chapter 5, White commits an unpardonable act by quoting directly from our sacred temple ceremony. He is aware that Latter-day Saints view this action as sacrilegious. White has plenty of sticks with which to beat the Church of Jesus Christ, but it was unnecessary for him to select this one. By so doing, he fails to foster the kind of

dialogue that allows for true understanding. Sadly, he makes it clear elsewhere in his book that he has no interest in dialogue with Mormons.\(^19\) Although we Latter-day Saints will always extend to our critics the invitation to engage in dialogue, White must understand that a serious breach has occurred here.

- In his discussion of the Book of Mormon, White describes it as "a record of the inhabitants of North America in ancient times" (p. 24). Apparently, his grasp of even the most basic issues concerning the Book of Mormon has not evolved all that much.\(^20\) Informed LDS scholars have postulated for years that the Nephite lands were in Mesoamerica, not North America.\(^21\)

- On occasion, White makes statements that betray a paucity of scholarly acumen, such as this one: "Numerous works exist dealing with the Book of Mormon by way of criticism and refutation. One that has caused quite a stir amongst defenders of Mormonism comes from the liberal branch of Mormonism itself: *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993)" (p. 230 n. 2). Really? Metcalfe’s book deals with the Book of Mormon both by way of criticism and refutation? I suspect White knows better than this. Be that as it may, anyone who has given even a cursory glance at the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1 (published by FARMS in 1994), can attest that Metcalfe’s book received a thorough trouncing.\(^22\)

---

19. “I find no biblical warrant for seeking ‘dialogue’... with the Mormon faith” (pp. 183-84). "I believe we should ... openly... [expose] the errors of Joseph Smith and his followers" (p. 184). “We do not show Christian love or concern to muddle the issues with relativistic ‘dialogue’” (ibid.).


22. In addition to vol. 6, no. 1 (1994) of the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, which dealt exclusively with the Metcalfe book, several other reviews of portions of the Metcalfe book are equally devastating to the theses of some of Metcalfe’s contributors. See especially Ross D. Baron, review of “Book of Mormon Christology,” by Melodie M. Charles,
Other minor problems mar White’s work as well, such as his claim that the Book of Abraham locates God’s place of habitation on a star named Kolob (see p. 245 n. 13), his failure to correctly reference a publication of Stephen E. Robinson (see p. 231 n. 26), his incorrect title of a publication by Joseph Fielding Smith (see p. 231 n. 28), and his error-prone, incomplete index. But these are small matters compared to the main question White addresses: Is Mormonism polytheistic and therefore outside the pale of Christian orthodoxy? It is to this central thesis of White’s book that I now turn my attention.

Is Mormonism Polytheistic?

To allow White to speak for himself, I will quote from three passages in his book to give the reader an idea of his position on the core difference between “Mormonism and Christianity” (his wording).

The key issue upon which Christians have always agreed is this: There is one eternal God, Creator of all things. In the midst of all the disagreements that one can find in the early Christian writings, this is one belief that is found universally. One God, who has eternally been God, is the object of Christian worship and adoration, the object of Christian contemplation and theological study. Not only will one find this confession made over and over again by individual church Fathers but the creeds all begin with the same truth. Long before the Council of Nicaea argued about how the persons of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Spirit, are related to one another, one issue was settled beyond question: absolute, uncompromised, ontological monotheism. (p. 45, emphasis in original)


23. For example, John Widstoe is not listed in the index, even though his name appears on pages 116–17. Likewise, the index lists the “King Follet Discourse” only once, on page 233, when in fact, the book cites or alludes to that sermon on at least pages 65–76, 80, 90–91, 94–95, 102, 113, 134, 144, 149, 169, 176, 181, 183, and 209.
Everything ultimately comes down to a simple fact: Mormons and Christians worship different Gods. We may use the same terminology on a host of issues, but we differ all along the line simply because we start at completely different places. We begin with the one eternal God, while Mormons begin with eternal matter, intelligences, and the law of eternal progression. The two systems, then, will end up differing with each other on a basic, definitional basis, all along the line. (p. 128)

Christianity begins with the following [sic] Jewish prayer [Deuteronomy 6:4–6, which was actually quoted above], for here the God who would reveal himself in Jesus Christ in Bethlehem revealed to His ancient people the fact that He alone is God. The Lord, Yahweh, is the God of Israel. Yahweh is not a “committee” of gods, so to speak. Yahweh is one. As the one God of Israel, He is to be loved with all the heart, soul, and might. Jesus said this is the greatest commandment. Monotheism allows for undivided devotion to the one true God, and this is the command found in the Shema, the central prayer of the Jewish people. God’s people stood out sharply against the heathen nations that surrounded them. (p. 129)

The essence of White’s argument is that since Christians have always been monotheists, and since Mormons are polytheists,24 Mormons are, therefore, not Christians. By extension, the Mormon is not a brother to the Christian. White’s thesis suffers from a number of defects, some of which I will describe below.

First, although White’s argument reflects common assumptions about the religious history of Judaism, those assumptions are not always so applicable to the history of early Christianity. The notion that only one monolithic view of Deity has run throughout Judeo-Christian history is a gross distortion. And since White has read widely in the field, his views should have been stated more cautiously.

24. He explicitly makes that charge on pages 72, 109, 125, and 182 (and implicitly throughout).
One prime example that puts a chink in the armor of White’s thesis comes to us from the well-informed Robert M. Grant, professor of New Testament and early Christianity in the Divinity School of the University of Chicago. In a very compelling and important study on the doctrine of God held by the early Christian church, Grant writes as follows:

In a papyrus published in 1949 we possess a fascinating account of a “discussion of Origen with Heraclides and the bishops with him, concerning the Father, the Son, and the soul.” A translation of the opening pages of this discussion is given here because it carries us into the kind of arena in which the early patristic theological questions were often fought out.25

The translation that follows is indeed fascinating, as well as damaging to White’s thesis:

Since the bishops present had raised questions about the faith of the bishop Heraclidès, so that in the presence of all he might acknowledge his faith, and each of them had made remarks and had raised the question, the bishop Heraclidès said: “And I too believe exactly what the divine scriptures say: ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into existence through him, and nothing came into existence apart from him.’ So we agree in the faith and, furthermore, we believe that the Christ assumed flesh, that he was born, that he ascended into the heavens with the flesh in which he arose, and that he is seated at the right hand of the Father, whence he is going to come and judge the living and the dead, being God and man.”

Origen said: “Since a debate is now beginning and one may speak on the subject of the debate, I will speak. The whole church

is here to listen. One church should not differ from another in knowledge, since you are not the false community. I ask you, Father Heraclides. God is the almighty, the uncreated, the supreme one who made all things. Do you agree?”

Heraclides said: “I agree; for thus I too believe.”

Origen said: “Christ Jesus, who exists in the form of God, though he is distinct from God in the form in which he existed, was he God before he entered a body or not?”

Heraclides said: “He was God before.”

Origen said: “He was God before he entered a body, or not?”

Heraclides said: “Yes.”

Origen said: “God distinct from this God in whose form he existed?”

Heraclides said: “Obviously distinct from any other, since he is in the form of that one who created everything.”

Origen said: “Was there not a God, Son of God, the only-begotten of God, the first-born of all creation, and do we not devoutly say that in one sense there are two Gods and, in another, one God?”

Heraclides said: “What you say is clear; but we say that there is God, the almighty, without beginning and without end, containing all things but not contained, and there is his Word, Son of the living God, God and man, through whom all things came into existence, God in relation to the Spirit and man in that he was born of Mary.”

Origen said: “You do not seem to have answered my question. Make it clear; perhaps I did not follow you. Is the Father God?”

Heraclides said: “Certainly.”

Origen said: “Is the Son distinct from the Father?”

Heraclides said: “How can he be Son if he is also Father?”

Origen said: “While distinct from the Father, is the Son himself also God?”

Heraclides said: “He himself is also God.”

Origen said: “And the two Gods become one?”
Heraclides said: "Yes."
Origen said: "Do we acknowledge two Gods?"
Heraclides said: "Yes; the power is one."
Origen said: "But since our brethren are shocked by the affirmation that there are two Gods, the subject must be examined with care in order to show in what respect they are two and in what respect the two are one God."  

Thus we have here a glimpse into the early Christian church on the specific topic of whether the Father and the Son can properly be thought of as two separate Gods in a Christian context. This glimpse strongly supports the position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Second, I would also have to qualify White’s thesis as it relates to Judaism. In a carefully written piece, Larry W. Hurtado (not a Latter-day Saint) instructs us:

I suggest that for historical investigation our policy should be to take people as monotheistic if that is how they describe themselves, in spite of what we might be inclined to regard at first as anomalies in their beliefs. . . . Otherwise, we implicitly import a definition from the sphere of theological polemics in an attempt to do historical analysis. . . . If we are to avoid a priori definitions and the imposition of our own theological judgments, we have no choice but to accept as monotheism the religion of those who profess to be monotheists, however much their religion varies and may seem "complicated" with other beings in addition to the one God.  

Hurtado gives additional counsel that applies to those who seek to understand the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints:

If we wish to understand ancient Jewish and Christian monotheism . . . if we wish to know how it operated and what it meant, . . . we should pay considerable attention to the way

26. Ibid., 69–70.
their commitment to the uniqueness of one God was exhibited in their practice with regard to granting cultic veneration to other beings or figures.  

Other beings or figures? Could these be exalted, divine, deified beings? Is Hurtado, an eminent authority on such matters, asleep at the wheel? I should say not. He continues:

Jews were quite willing to imagine beings who bear the divine name within them and can be referred to by one or more of God's titles, . . . beings so endowed with divine attributes as to be difficult to distinguish them descriptively from God, beings who are very direct personal extensions of God's powers and sovereignty. About this, there is clear evidence. This clothing of servants of God with God's attributes and even his name will seem "theologically very confusing" if we go looking for a "strict monotheism" of relatively modern distinctions of "ontological status" between God and these figures.

This explanation brings us to the crux of the matter before us. Informed Latter-day Saints, when confronted with passages from Isaiah to the effect that there is only one God (see Isaiah 43:10–11; 44:6, 8; 45:5; 46:9), usually remind the critic that these Isaianic passages suggest that it is the theme of idol worship or idolatry that is being addressed, not man's potential exaltation and deification (see Isaiah 43:12; 44:9–10; 45:16; 46:1, 6). White understands that this is the Mormon position (see pp. 130–32). Yet even after acknowledging that position, White ignores its ramifications and continues to charge Mormons with entering the realm of worship when contemplating the doctrine of deification. Three more passages from his book will bear this out:

God is not saying, "There are no false gods or idols other than Me." He is the true God; He is denying the existence of any other true Gods, any others who are worthy of worship.

28. Ibid.
29. Ibid., 364.
But God’s purpose is plain: “There is no God besides Me.” Idolatry is inherently foolish simply because there is no worthy object of worship other than the one true God. (p. 132, emphasis in original)

God takes His truth very seriously. This is not a matter of theological finery—it is the difference between idolatry and worship, salvation and eternal punishment. Joseph Smith has led millions to follow “gods whom you have not known.” (p. 134)

Many Christians make the grave error of thinking that there is no way that a system like Mormonism, replete with its concept of God as an exalted man, could ever muster a robust defense of its own position. And from one perspective, that is true, in that there is no meaningful way of defending the simple idolatry that is the LDS theology of God. (pp. 185–86)

White (a self-proclaimed expert on Mormon doctrine) has completely misunderstood and misstated Mormon doctrine on the matter. Mormons in no way worship fellow mortals who have or will become exalted beings. In the Mormon worldview, worship is reserved for God the Father, through the name of God the Son, and by the power of God the Holy Ghost. The Encyclopedia of Mormonism spells the matter out thus: “Latter-day Saint worship is defined as coming unto the Father in the name of Jesus Christ, in spirit and truth . . . Worship is idolatry unless it is reverent homage and devotion to the living God.”30 A latter-day apostle has articulated it this way: “The world encourages us to pay attention to secular Caesars. The gospel tells us, however, that these Caesars come and go in an hour of pomp and show. It is God whom we should worship, and His Son, Jesus Christ.”31 Hurtado’s comments in this regard are perfectly aligned with Latter-day Saint doctrine:

It is precisely with reference to worship that ancient Jewish religious tradition most clearly distinguished the unique one God from other beings, even those described as “divine” and clothed with god-like attributes. . . . Jews seem to have been quite ready to accommodate various divine beings. The evidence we have surveyed here shows that it is in fact in the area of worship that we find “the decisive criterion” by which Jews maintained the uniqueness of God over against both idols and God’s own deputies. . . .

To summarize this point, God’s sovereignty was imagined as including many figures, some of them in quite prominent roles. There was a plurality in the operation of the divine as characteristically described by ancient Jews. God was distinguished from other beings most clearly in this: It is required to offer God worship; it is inappropriate to offer worship to any other.32

To which the Latter-day Saint would say, “Amen and amen!”

Third, White fails to distinguish between three interrelated topics: veneration issues, soteriological issues, and ontological issues. Veneration issues are at the foundation of understanding Mormon views of God. The questions in this venue include “Whom do we worship? Whom should we worship? Is there a disparity?” Then we look at soteriology, which raises the questions “What does it really mean to be in a saved and exalted condition in the eternities? If we are to become gods, does this in any way cause Latter-day Saints to become conceited or proud?” Finally, we come to the important ontological or cosmological concerns regarding God the Father, which include “Did God the Father ever experience a mortality (or second estate) at some point in the distant past? Does believing he did in any way cause Latter-day Saints to denigrate God?”

White’s thesis muddles all three issues. White assumes that if Mormons believe God the Father had a past that included mortality, then he must not be an all-powerful God. He likewise implies that if Mormons believe they can become like God, that belief must, of necessity, produce egotism and arrogance, as well as a low view of God. Thus White takes for granted the idea that Mormons must be guilty of idol worship. Non-LDS scholar Ernst W. Benz had a different understanding of the matter:

Now, this idea of deification could give rise to a misunderstanding, namely, that it leads to a blasphemous self-aggrandizement of man. . . . But the concept of Imago Dei, in the Christian understanding of the term, precisely does not aspire to awaken in man a consciousness of his own divinity but attempts to have him recognize the image of God in his neighbor.33

Fourth, White fails to allow for the subtle distinctions between official Mormon doctrine and speculative theology. Speculative theology refers to inferences we make based on other accepted doctrines (or even on folklore). Ideas or postulates that fall under the realm of speculative theology do not enjoy the status of binding doctrine; such speculations do not reflect the normative body of accepted dogmas of the group in question. Thus, in the Roman Catholic world, the doctrine of transubstantiation is considered orthodox doctrine, while certain notions of Jesus Christ as the eschatological union of time and eternity fall within the realm of speculative theology. To take a Protestant example, the notion of Christ’s second coming is doctrine, but the various eschatological positions—amillennial, postmillennial, or premillennial—are speculative theology. These views, all based on interpretations of the Bible, may be true or false; however, believing one or the other does not cause one to forfeit one’s standing as a Christian. Likewise, in Mormonism, Latter-day Saints may

believe that the Almighty God, the Father of Jesus Christ, once experienced mortality. Yet, beyond that one assertion, no Latter-day Saint can say with certainty what that mortal life consisted of. Likewise, Latter-day Saints believe that those who inherit salvation in the highest sphere of the celestial kingdom will be gods. Comments that move beyond that point fall increasingly into the realm of speculative theology. The same could be said for the virgin birth; Mormons agree that Jesus was sired by the Father, not by the Holy Ghost (as described in Luke 1:35). Anything specified beyond that statement concerning the exact mode of conception falls in the realm of speculative theology. The same can be said for statements about Christ's marital status. Even if it turns out that he was married (which not all Latter-day Saints believe or even give much thought to), until a revelation is received that is binding upon the church as official doctrine, any comments in this arena are speculation.34

Fifth, I have misgivings about White’s treatment of the doctrine of apotheosis itself. He handles the topic throughout his book, but the most succinct presentation is in his appendix, “Theosis—Becoming a God?” Initially, White relies heavily on the writings of another evangelical writer, G. L. Prestige. White first supplies us with a lengthy quotation from Prestige that suggests Prestige neither accepts nor is comfortable with the doctrine of theosis (see pp. 209–10). Using this quotation puts an evangelical spin on the doctrine that whitewashes it to the point of nonrecognition. Turning to Prestige to discover what the early church fathers believed about apotheosis is akin to summoning liberal political activist James Carville to assess the virtues of the conservative position. As I have already demonstrated by quoting from the Westminster Dictionary of Christian Theology,35 deification is considered orthodox and not aberrant as
White (and Prestige) would have us believe. White simply doesn't like the doctrine and therefore turns to another like-minded scholar and quotes him for support; he has not given his readers a thorough or balanced treatment. White's own views on the topic are summarized here as follows:

The simple reason that LDS scholars are in error in pointing to these passages [of the early church fathers who clearly supported the idea of theosis] is that a fundamental, definitional aspect of their own beliefs is completely missing from the faith of the early Fathers. That is, there is no parallel to the LDS belief in eternal progression because the early Fathers believed something fundamentally different about the nature of God, making any parallel impossible. What did the Fathers believe that the Mormons do not? Or, what do the Mormons believe that the early Christians did not? The answer is simple: The early Christians believed that God had always been God, and they did not believe that God had once been a man who lived on another planet and progressed to godhood. (p. 208, emphasis in original)

And there you have it. President Lorenzo Snow's couplet ("As man now is, God once was. As God now is, man may become") is well-known in LDS circles. However, White seems to reason that since the early Christians did not believe in the first half of the couplet, they must not have believed in nor mentioned the concept summarized in the second half (even though the early Christians did, in fact, believe it). I would venture to say that while the first part of the couplet is clearly the more difficult doctrine, it becomes logically palatable when one first embraces the second part of the couplet. In other words, if the doctrine of apotheosis is true, if it is possible for mankind, in the eternities, to rise to the status of deity, one can logically conclude that God the Father might himself have gone through that same process. Alternatively, if it is possible for Jesus Christ to become incarnate and experience mortality and if he claimed the Father as his model in all things, again, one can logically conclude that God the Father did himself go through a similar process.
White continues: “If one is going to parallel theosis with eternal progression, one must be able to demonstrate that the same Fathers who spoke of deification also spoke of God becoming God through a process of exaltation” (p. 218, emphasis in original). This is faulty logic. That Mormons believe X and Y and that Mormons happen to find support for Y with the early church fathers does not mean that Mormons must find like support for X in the early church fathers as well.

White further asserts, “The concept of God having become a god through a process is totally absent from the church fathers” (p. 218, emphasis in original). Yet the notion does find support in a largely unknown source, a text of Armenian apocryphal literature which treats the Garden of Eden story:

When Adam departed and was walking around in the garden, the serpent spoke to Eve and said, “Why do you taste of all the trees, but from this one tree which is beautiful in appearance you do not taste?” Eve said, “Because God said, ‘When you eat of that tree, you shall die.’” But the serpent said, “God has deceived you, for formerly God was man like you. When he ate of that fruit, he attained this great glory. That is why he told you not to eat, lest eating <it> you would become equal to God.”36

I would suspect that White would not only reject this text as non-Christian, but would also point out that the idea that God was once a man is satanic since it comes through the voice of the serpent. This reasoning reminds me of a cult-watcher of an earlier vintage, Walter Martin, who used to goad LDS missionaries with a line about how the notion that men can become gods is in the Bible. After supposedly setting up a couple of nineteen-year-old elders, Martin would then lower the boom by citing Genesis 3:4-5 to the effect that “ye shall not surely die, for God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof,

36. W. Lowndes Lipscomb, The Armenian Apocryphal Adam Literature (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1990), 262, versification omitted and paragraphing changed. I am indebted to John Tvedtmes for alerting me to this source. For a fuller treatment of this and similar texts with commentary, see John Tvedtmes, Joseph Smith and the Ancient World, forthcoming from FARMS.
then your eyes shall be opened and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.” Martin would then loudly claim victory, inasmuch as those are the words of the serpent, not God. Of course, Martin would consistently overlook the fact that seventeen verses later, the Almighty himself confirmed that a key part of what the serpent said in this instance was true: “And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil” (see Genesis 3:22). But back to the issue of apotheosis.

White has never been very comfortable with the idea of apotheosis, perhaps because the doctrine receives scant attention in his own orthodox Baptist faith. Although his writings demonstrate his wholesale rejection of the doctrine, he never really defines what the early church fathers meant by it. He never tells his readers exactly what constitutes the doctrine of apotheosis, just that the doctrine couldn’t possibly comport with what the Mormons teach. This is not scholarship but rhetoric. When White does, on the rare occasion, agree to discuss issues such as these with an informed Latter-day Saint, the results are telling.37

Finally, I would be interested to know just how consistent White is in labeling people as monotheistic or polytheistic. He seems to acknowledge on the one hand that the litmus test is worship, yet he still charges Mormons with polytheism even though they limit their wor-

37. See the lengthy Internet exchange with Professor William J. Hamblin of Brigham Young University on the specific meaning of John 10:34 and Psalm 82:6 as they relate to the idea of apotheosis, at shields-research.org/A-O_Min.htm, “Correspondence with James White by Dr. William Hamblin.” To put it bluntly, Hamblin overwhelmed White. I forecasted just such a scenario when I reviewed White’s earlier work, Letters to a Mormon Elder: “It would have been much more interesting and balanced had the letters been written between Mr. White and an actual member of the Latter-day Saint Church with the proper background, but then that would change the entire outcome of the book.” L. Ara Norwood, review of Letters to a Mormon Elder, by James White, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 5 (1993): 320. And LDS studies on the doctrine of apotheosis continue to be more defined and compelling. For the definitive work thus far on this topic from an LDS perspective, see Daniel C. Peterson, “‘Ye Are Gods’: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind,” in The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 471–594.
ship to the Almighty. In other passages, White seems to imply that it doesn’t really matter if you worship the one true God—even an awareness of other gods (void of worship) renders one a polytheist. If that is the case, I would be interested in how White would label someone who did not worship the one true God but did believe in his existence as the only divine Being in all of creation. Would that individual, devoid of any desire to worship the Almighty but aware of his existence as the only Supreme Being in the cosmos, be considered a monotheist? If not, by what criteria could White possibly deny such a person the label?

Tolerance for the Beliefs of Others

One additional element that I have found in James White’s book should also be addressed—the issue of bigotry. I think books of this type engender a number of unfortunate results, some of which are all too often overlooked by their authors. Although James White may mean well in his efforts, his book contains a number of elements that could be destructive far beyond the level his rhetoric calls for.

The first thing that stands out in this regard is the very title of the book. White has claimed no responsibility for the title but has instead laid the responsibility for it at the feet of the publisher. Yet it is hard to swallow that explanation, for the question *Is the Mormon My Brother?* appears throughout the text in key places, demonstrating that the question in the title represents the theme of the book. He asks the question on pages 20, 22, 106, and 168. In chapter 10 White brings the question to a climactic resolution. (As might be expected, White’s answer to the question is a resounding “No!”)

Thankfully, White does seem to understand the implications of what he is saying and how it may be construed by his fellow believers—many of whom, as White describes them in the first chapter, view Mormonism as the “very embodiment of evil itself” (p. 17). Thus he writes, “The question [‘Is the Mormon my brother?’] is not asked on the level of common humanity—is the Mormon a fellow human being, a fellow image bearer of God? The answer to that would obvi-
ously be yes, of course. All humans are related to one another in that sense” (p. 168). (Governor Boggs would not have been so gracious.)

With a book like this, I have often found it useful to ask “What then?” questions. In other words, once the conclusion is reached that “the Mormon is not the brother to the Christian” because of beliefs the Mormon may or may not hold, I like to clarify that construct. What then? What should the “Christian” do about that? White thinks that the proper solution is to “love” the Mormon people. And the way White feels he can best demonstrate that love is apparently to refute and expose them. “And so in part I write out of love for the LDS people” (p. 168).

Further, because we believe differently about the nature of God, White feels he cannot pray alongside a Latter-day Saint:

I know that I personally have been reminded, through working on this text, of the importance of Christian worship and the high privilege I have to regularly engage in the corporate worship of God by His people. It is a wonderful gift of grace to be able to join together with like-minded people and worship God in spirit and in truth. I am reminded that we are praying to the same God, who is powerful to save and to answer prayer. I cannot so pray with a Mormon person. We are worshipping different gods. (p. 170, emphasis in original)

White’s antipathy toward the Church of Jesus Christ may lead to some interesting, if not unfortunate, policies. Early in the book he poses these questions: “Can I have fellowship with a Mormon as a fellow ‘Christian’? Can I lead my church in cooperative efforts with Mormons in, say, a food or clothing drive? And what of cooperation on moral issues like abortion or homosexuality?” (see p. 16). Although White never explicitly answers these questions, I wondered if he would sooner allow legislation to pass supporting abortion and homosexuality than compromise his “standards” and join forces with Latter-day Saints in fighting a common enemy. It is often said that “my enemy’s enemy is my friend.” One would think that White would see Mormons as allies in counteracting social ills such as child abuse,
pornography, prostitution, gambling, drug abuse, violent crime, abortion, and homosexuality.

By claiming that “Mormonism is not Christianity” and “is a false religion with a false god” (p. 169), White, in one of the strangest portions of his book, seems to morally equate the religion of the Church of Jesus Christ with homosexuality:

The Christian worships the Lord of time itself and trusts in His unchanging nature. His promises are sure and everlasting because He is sure and everlasting. But what of the person who rejects the true God and embraces falsehood? God mocks the false idols, but He also has strong words for the person who chooses such idols. “He who chooses you is an abomination.” We dare not miss the meaning of the Lord at this point. The Hebrew term that is used here is found elsewhere in the Old Testament. How does God view the idolater? The very same term is used of the idols themselves in Deuteronomy 7:26: They are an abomination to God. But to see how serious this sin is in God’s eyes, realize that the very same Hebrew word, to-evaḥ, “abomination,” is used in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 in reference to homosexuality itself. God says homosexuality is to-evaḥ, and He says the person who chooses a god other than the very Creator and Lord of time itself is, likewise, to-evaḥ. (p. 147, emphasis in original)

Although when compared with the author’s earlier attempts to write about Mormons and Mormonism, this book shows some improvements, it is still replete with problems. No serious student of Mormonism (LDS or non-LDS) is likely to take such a publication seriously. The meaning and contours of Mormonism, the nuances and subtleties, are all missing. White’s proclamations about Mormonism are filled with misleading or blatantly false ideas that have calcified into orthodoxies. White is apparently not interested in becoming a serious and reliable voice in the ongoing dialogue between Mormons and evangelicals. White has seriously cut corners with this publication on Mormonism. He is clearly capable of much better than this; it is regrettable that an individual with his energy and re-
sources would squander the opportunity to make a meaningful contribution to the dialogue.