

# Introduction

The somewhat cryptic title of this work—*Offenders for a Word*—comes from the twenty-ninth chapter of the book of Isaiah, a chapter that is not only replete with prophecies of the restoration of the gospel and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon, but with predictions of the kind of opposition that would greet the latter-day work. Much of this opposition, as we are convinced and attempt to show in the pages that follow, rests upon the manipulation of language, upon illegitimate semantic games that truly make innocent people “offenders for a word.”

While we are confident that our conclusions are fully justified by the evidence as well as by reason, we are aware that these conclusions may seem controversial to some of our readers. In order to avoid the possible suggestion of tendentiousness in our renderings of early Christian materials, we have generally followed standard English translations of these sources, rather than providing our own. To the best of our ability, we have followed the plain sense of these, as well as other source that we cite, although we are aware that other interpretations are possible. Given the very large number of references that we cite in the course of this work, it is inevitable that some unintentional errors may have crept in. We feel confident, however, that such errors as there might be have had no effect on the argument.

This book has taken many years, moving by fits and starts, to reach publication. Many people have helped us along the way. We wish to thank Ronald E. Taylor and our colleague Prof. Dilworth B. Parkinson, who stepped in to save an early version of the book from a disastrous computer failure. Robert L. Durocher, John Gee, and Matthew Roper supplied useful information. Adam Lamoreaux and Gaye Strathern did yeoman service in reading portions of the text and in checking many of the references. Deborah D. Peterson was supportive in many ways, direct and indirect. Shirley S. Ricks helped in getting the material into a publishable format, as did Melvin J. Thorne. Curtis Taylor and Stan Zenk, of Aspen Books, were a pleasure to work with. We also express our gratitude to Reverend Stephen Hoekstra, of Veil, Colorado, and Reverend Henry F. Fingerlin, of Littleton, Colorado, who—doubtless unintentionally—provided some of the inspiration for our writing. Though unsympathetic to our position, Reverend H. Jeffrey Silliman, of Salt Lake City, offered useful comments on an early draft.

We dedicate this volume to our wives, Deborah and Shirley.