

Is Mormonism Christian? An Investigation of Definitions, part 2

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Claim 2. Mormons do not really believe in the deity of Jesus because they reject traditional dogma on the Trinity.¹⁸⁴ In Mormondom, alleges G. H. Fraser, “Athanasius is scorned and Arius is eulogized.”¹⁸⁵ Mormons are “tritheists.” And, thus, since they reject the Trinity, “the most basic of all Christian doctrines,” they cannot possibly be considered Christian.¹⁸⁶

Response. Fraser’s accusation is, of course, sheer nonsense. Athanasius and Arius, the Egyptian churchmen who were the principal figures in the theological controversies of the fourth century, are never mentioned in Latter-day Saint sermons and Sunday School classes; not one Mormon in a hundred would even recognize their names. The christological debates of the fourth and fifth centuries are in fact utterly irrelevant to Mormon theology, which does not share the Hellenistic metaphysical presuppositions that alone make them intelligible, and that, indeed, provoked them. (The way in which Latter-day Saint doctrine pierces through the centuries-old debates between Arianism and Nestorianism and Monophysitism and their rivals must surely rank among his greatest if least appreciated achievements.)

Even if the Latter-day Saints could legitimately be classified as “Arians,” it would not make them non-Christian since being Arians in the first place did not banish the original followers of Arius from Christendom. Arianism “denied the true Divinity of Jesus Christ. . . . He was not God by nature, but a changeable creature, His dignity as Son of God having been bestowed on Him by the Father on account of His foreseen abiding righteousness.”¹⁸⁷ Yet, as we have seen, Arianism is always termed Christian.¹⁸⁸ (This is altogether appropriate since, as Norbert Brox points out, subordinationism, of which Arianism is a subspecies, represents the original Christian outlook¹⁸⁹—a point at which, significantly, there probably is some affinity with the Mormon view.)

The fact that the Latter-day Saints are neither Athanasians nor genuine Arians, nor indeed any kind of trinitarians at all in the typical meaning of the word, should not mislead observers into thinking that they reject the divine Sonship of Jesus. Unlike such ancient groups as the Ebionites, who are universally referred to as “Jewish Christians,” Mormons emphatically declare the deity of Christ.¹⁹⁰ “We believe in God, the Eternal Father,” they declare in their first Article of Faith, “and in His Son, Jesus Christ, and in the Holy Ghost.” Thus, while not conventionally trinitarian, they declare forthrightly their belief in a three-person Godhead which is in all crucial respects the functional equivalent of the Greek metaphysical Trinity, and which includes as its second member a fully-divine Son. Indeed, so insistent is the Book of Mormon upon the divinity of Christ that Krister Stendahl, former dean of Harvard Divinity School and Lutheran bishop of Sweden, as well as a sympathetic critic of the Latter-day Saints, has suggested that it goes too far!¹⁹¹

We must be clear on the issue here. Despite the frequency with which Christ’s divinity and trinitarian metaphysics are identified with each other,¹⁹² the linkage is extremely dubious on both logical and historical grounds.

Trinitarianism hardly seems a valid litmus test for determining who is, and who is not, Christian.¹⁹³ Indeed, the metaphysical doctrine of the Trinity is a very late development, and hardly to be found with clarity in the Bible.¹⁹⁴ The first Christian author to use the term is Theophilus of Antioch, who flourished in the late second century, and it is very doubtful that he meant by it what contemporary theologians mean, since the term had yet to go through a

long philosophical and theological evolution before it reached any kind of stability.¹⁹⁵ Trinitarianism cannot be said to have been fully present among early Christians, in the sense to which the Latter-day Saints are being held. There was, for instance, a tendency in Justin Martyr (d. ca. A.D. 165), as among the apologists of the second century generally, to an idea of two Gods, and not three.¹⁹⁶ The theology of Clement of Alexandria (d. ca. A.D. 215) was also “really Binitarian.”¹⁹⁷ W. H. C. Frend believes that the charge of “ditheism” (i.e., having a two-member Godhead) commonly made against Hippolytus (d. A.D. 235) was probably justified.¹⁹⁸ “The exact theological definition of the doctrine of the Trinity,” notes the Protestant Bible commentator J. R. Dummelow, “was the result of a long process of development, which was not complete till the fifth century or even later.” Dummelow goes on, it is true, to observe that “the doctrine itself underlies the whole New Testament, which everywhere attributes divinity to the Father, the Son and the Spirit, and assigns to them distinct functions in the economy of human redemption.”¹⁹⁹ But we must beware here of shifting meanings. What Dummelow means when he speaks of “the doctrine” that “underlies the whole New Testament” is merely the portrayal of a divine Father, a divine Son, and a divine Holy Ghost, united while nonetheless carrying out their various roles. But this picture of the Godhead is compatible both with the metaphysical Trinity, as that doctrine later evolved, and with the doctrine of the Latter-day Saints. It is far too inclusive to justify expelling the Mormons from Christendom. As Gerhard Kittel’s famous *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* observes, “The NT does not actually speak of triunity. We seek this in vain in the triadic formulae of the NT. . . . Early Christianity itself . . . does not yet have the problem of the Trinity in view.”²⁰⁰ This point cannot be overstressed, for it demonstrates beyond any question that the New Testament does not exclude Latter-day Saints from Christendom over the issue of the Trinity.

Ironically, however, anti-Mormon trinitarianism may well serve to exclude the early Christian Church. We have seen that neither Clement of Alexandria nor Hippolytus nor Justin Martyr held to a full-blown doctrine of the Trinity. Neither, apparently, did the very earliest followers of Jesus. For “the New Testament itself is far from any doctrine of the Trinity or of a Triune God who is three co-equal Persons of One Nature.”²⁰¹ “We cannot,” notes one prominent non-Mormon scholar, “read back into the New Testament, much less the Old Testament, the more sophisticated trinitarian theology and doctrine which slowly and often unevenly developed over the course of some fifteen centuries.”²⁰² “To insist that a belief in the Trinity is requisite to being Christian,” Bill Forrest aptly remarks, “is to acknowledge that for centuries after the New Testament was completed thousands of Jesus’ followers were in fact not really ‘Christian.’”²⁰³

And what of Mormon “tritheism”?²⁰⁴ A doctrine known as tritheism was taught by a number of prominent theologians in late antiquity, and can be considered “a definite phase in the history of Christian thought.”²⁰⁵ It is never termed “non-Christian.”²⁰⁶ In the sixth century A.D., its leading exponent is John Philoponus, the philosopher and Aristotelian commentator.²⁰⁷ Not surprisingly, he is always described by scholars as a Christian.²⁰⁸ But if such figures as Philoponus are too late and too philosophical for our critics, we might point as well to the pseudepigraphic *Ascension of Isaiah*, written sometime between the second and fourth centuries A.D. This early document features a vision of a clearly distinct Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.²⁰⁹ Yet scholars uniformly refer to it as a Christian text. Obviously, if ancient tritheists were Christians, there is no reason to deny that title to modern tritheists—even if we grant that the term is an adequate one to describe the Mormon understanding of the Godhead, which we do here only for the purposes of argument.

The charge of “tritheism” might surely be leveled at the well-known fundamentalist preacher Jimmy Swaggart. In a brief paper entitled “What is Meant by the Trinity? And When We Get to Heaven Will We See Three Gods?”

Swaggart has explained that “the term ‘one;’ as applied to the Godhead, “means one in unity.” “The three are one in the sense that they are always perfectly agreed; with never any disharmony between them [sic].” Yet, he continues, the blessed souls in heaven will actually see three distinct divine beings upon their arrival there.²¹⁰ Has Jimmy Swaggart ever been called non-Christian by any evangelical or fundamentalist Protestant? If so, we are unaware of it. How, then, can the Latter-day Saints be barred from Christendom on the basis of a standard which does not serve to expel Jimmy Swaggart as well?

Anti-Mormons who denounce The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as tritheistic need to check the thickness of their glass house’s walls before they continue, since their own trinitarian understanding of the Godhead looks like tritheism to rigidly monotheistic Jews and Muslims. “Judaism, Islam, and Christianity claim to be monotheistic,” noted the late S. G. F. Brandon, “but the title of Christianity is disputed by the other two on the grounds that the doctrine of the Trinity is tritheism.”²¹¹ Even dissenters within the Christian tradition have sometimes felt uneasy with trinitarian theology. From the point of view of the Sabellian bishops of early Christianity, the doctrine of the trinity appeared to be tritheistic.²¹ But not only by them. Many ordinary Christians of those first centuries were disturbed by such doctrinal innovations. “The beginnings of the church’s trinitarian theology were perceived as polytheism and were rejected as heresy in the name of the biblical God.”²¹³

Claim 3. Mormonism must be considered non-Christian because of its “altogether revolting teaching concerning the Deity.”²¹⁴ Its anthropomorphism is “anti-Christian,” and “pagan.”²¹⁵ “In fact, the whole matter goes beyond the concept of ‘different views of God’; we are dealing with ‘views of different Gods.’”²¹⁶ The Mormon “‘God;’ explain Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, “is an extraterrestrial from Kolob, definitely not the God of the Bible.”²¹⁷ In a related vein, one active anti-Mormon ministry laments that Elder Reed Smoot, who served in the United States Senate for three decades, was “chosen to sit in Congress and make laws for this Christian country. He would have been more in place in the Senate of ancient Rome.”²¹⁸ “Dr.” Walter Martin claims that Mormonism is “a polytheistic nightmare of garbled doctrines draped with the garment of Christian terminology. This fact, if nothing else, brands it as a non-Christian cult system.”²¹⁹

Response: But polytheism is, to a certain extent, in the eye of the beholder. There are probably few communicant Mormons who would agree to being “polytheists,” and none who would claim to worship more than one God.²²⁰ Instead, Mormons are taught to worship the Father in the name of the Son (D&C 18:40, 20:29). And the late Elder Bruce R. McConkie’s consistent instruction to worship the Father only and, in a certain sense, not even the Son, must surely be described as monotheistic.²²¹ Astonishingly, it is also routinely condemned as non-Christian by critics who will then turn around and, with not the slightest inkling of their inconsistency, denounce Mormons as heathen polytheists who worship a pantheon of deities.²²²

As we have noted above, traditional Christianity itself is not straightforwardly monotheistic. Muslims, for example, who are rigidly and purely so, routinely refer to trinitarian Christians as *mushrikÄ«n*, or “polytheists.”²²³ And they are not alone in their uneasiness with a Godhead which is claimed to be simultaneously one and three. “The metaphysical insanities of Athanasius, of Loyola, and of Calvin,” wrote Thomas Jefferson to Jared Sparks in 1820, “are, to my understanding, mere relapses into polytheism, differing from paganism only by being more unintelligible.”²²⁴

Mainstream Christianity's uncertain hold on monotheism probably derives from the fact that Judaism, the religion out of which it grows, was itself perhaps not clearly monotheistic. This may come as a shock, since we usually think of Judaism as a pure monotheism if ever there was one. Our usual thinking, however, may be wrong. Carefully surveying the data, Peter Hayman concludes that "it is hardly ever appropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God." "The pattern of Jewish beliefs about God," he says, "remains monarchistic throughout. God is king of a heavenly court consisting of many other powerful beings. . . . For most [pre-modern] Jews, God is the sole object of worship, but he is not the only divine being. . . . This pattern is inherited from biblical times."²²⁵ It is a pattern, one might easily argue, that has been inherited by the Latter-day Saints.

Anti-Mormons, as noted above, sometimes charge that Latter-day Saint theology is so radically distinct from traditional notions that we must speak of "views of different Gods," rather than "different views of God." This is an interesting claim. It is closely related to the charge that Latter-day Saints have "a different Jesus." Yet it is very questionable, as an illustration from the history of science should demonstrate. Most ancient observers of the sky imagined it to be a solid structure, with lamps or windows (the stars) that permitted light to reach the earth. They gave various explanations for the moving lights of the planets, the sun, and the moon. Claudius Ptolemy's more scientific view of the cosmos, articulated in the second century A.D. but relying on centuries of Greek astronomy, retained the idea that the earth rested at the center of the solar system. The other planets, along with the sun and the moon, revolved around the earth in a complex combination of cycles and epicycles. Nicolaus Copernicus (d. A.D. 1543) put the sun at the center of the solar system instead of the earth, and had the planets (including the earth) moving in perfect, concentric circles around it. Finally, Johannes Kepler (d. A.D. 1630) kept the sun at the center of his scheme but elaborated a system of elliptical orbits. In doing so, he contradicted 2000 years of scientific tradition. These are decidedly different pictures of astronomical reality. Should we therefore say that we are dealing, not with different views of the same solar system, but with different solar systems? That Copernicus represents not a vast improvement upon Ptolemy's theory but a new theory about something utterly unrelated? That the Ptolemaic, Copernican, and Keplerian theories don't even deal with the same subject? (Such a bizarre approach would wreak havoc with the history of astronomy as it is universally understood.) Isn't it more reasonable to say that these theories deal in contradictory ways with exactly the same subject? That the ancient Babylonians, Ptolemy, Copernicus, and Kepler were attempting to make sense of and account for the data supplied by astronomical observation, just as, in their own sphere, differing theologies attempt to make sense of and account for the data supplied by revelation?

It is interesting to note that the Church of Rome runs afoul of Protestant fundamentalists on many of the same grounds which are used to expel the Latter-day Saints from Christianity. For instance, according to many of our self-anointed "authorities," Catholicism is "idolatrous."²²⁶ Among its numerous sins is the fact that it recognizes intermediaries, such as the various saints, between God and man.²²⁷ Particularly offensive, in the view of fundamentalist anti-Catholics, is the notion of of Mary as mediatrix.²²⁸ Yet reliance on such mediation was widespread in (what has historically been called) Christianity from at least the late second century.²²⁹ Though we do not subscribe to a belief in intermediaries (apart from Christ) and hold no particular brief for that belief, it does seem highly peculiar to claim that millions of believers in Jesus between the second century and the Reformation in the fifteenth—to say nothing of contemporary Catholic and Orthodox believers—were really non-Christian pagans. However much one may disagree with Catholic theology, any definition of Christianity that excludes the Church of Rome and virtually the entire period of the Middle Ages can only be described as, well, more than a little bit weird. Were the great cathedrals of the Age of Faith erected by pagans? Were Francis of Assisi and Thomas Aquinas heathens?

But if we admit, as it seems we must, that the acceptance of human intermediaries in prayer does not itself make an individual or a church non-Christian, how can a movement which admits no intermediary but Christ reasonably be dismissed from Christendom? There seems no justification for such a move. Yet this is precisely the case with Mormonism, which admits no human intermediaries in prayer and yet is vilified by its fundamentalist enemies as not only non-Christian but “anti-Christian.”

And, finally, does anthropomorphism really disqualify those who believe in it from being Christian? It would be odd if it did, for most Christians of the very earliest period were almost certainly anthropomorphists. As a recent article in the *Harvard Theological Review* contends, “ordinary Christians for at least the first three centuries of the current era commonly (and perhaps generally) believed God to be corporeal,” or embodied. “The belief was abandoned (and then only gradually) as Neoplatonism became more and more entrenched as the dominant world view of Christian thinkers.”²³⁰ And these early Christians had excellent biblical reasons for believing in a corporeal deity, as the contemporary fundamentalist preacher Jimmy Swaggart, an anthropomorphist himself, has noticed.²³¹ (But that argument would take us too far afield.)²³² Roland J. Teske has shown that the great Augustine turned to Manichaeism out of disgust at the anthropomorphism that characterized the Christianity in which he had been raised, and that he had thought was typical of Christianity as a whole. “Prior to Augustine (and, of course, the Neoplatonic group in Milan),” writes Teske, “the Western Church was simply without a concept of God as a spiritual substance.”²³³ Suffice it to note that the Audians, an anthropomorphizing and rigorist group of the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., seem always to be considered Christian by those scholars who discuss them.²³⁴ If anthropomorphism has not disqualified them from being Christians, and if—whatever his other problems—it has not disqualified Jimmy Swaggart, we find it difficult to understand why anthropomorphism would disqualify the Latter-day Saints. Must one be a Neoplatonist, a disciple of Greek philosophers like Plato and Plotinus, to be a Christian?²³⁵

Claim 4. Mormonism teaches that human beings can become like God. But this is massively offensive to anti-Mormons of all stripes and persuasions. “Any church who [sic] preaches a gospel such as this is definitely not Christian.”²³⁶ The doctrine is, according to many critics, pagan, occultic, and Satanic.²³⁷ It is so troubling to many mainstream Christians that the producers of one slickly dishonest anti-Mormon film chose it as their central attention-getting theme, and entitled their pseudo-documentary *The God Makers*. (Their efforts have since spawned a book of the same name, and an even more inflammatory sequel titled *Temples of the God Makers*.)

Response: Even a cursory glance at early Christian thought reveals that the idea of human deification—known in Greek as *theōsis* or *theopoiēsis*—is to be found throughout ancient Christianity.²³⁸ We are, of course, under no illusions that such figures as Athanasius and the Byzantine fathers—given their very different metaphysical and theological presuppositions—understood *theōsis* in precisely the same way as do the Latter-day Saints. It is certain that the ancient doctrine had undergone massive dislocations by the time it reached the sixteenth century. Clearly, it had already been “spiritualized” by the time of Pseudo-Dionysius, around A.D. 500, and, given the evolution of the Christian teaching on God, probably well before.²³⁹ Latter-day Saints, though, are in an enviable position here. Given our belief in an apostasy, we fully expect there to be differences, even vast differences, between the beliefs of the Fathers and Mormon doctrine. Any similarities that exist, however, are potentially understandable as survivals from before that apostasy. When any similarities, even partial ones, exist between Latter-day Saint beliefs and the teachings of the Fathers *but are absent between contemporary mainstream Christendom and the Fathers*, they can be viewed as deeply important. And the simple fact is that, on the specific question at issue here, Latter-day Saints teach a doctrine of deification, and many of the Fathers teach a doctrine of deification, but the

Protestant brand of Christianity espoused by most anti-Mormons does not. We suspect, in fact, that even relatively late statements on *theōsis* represent the Hellenization of an earlier doctrine—one that was perhaps much closer to Mormon belief. According to a very early formula, “God became man that man might become God.”²⁴⁰ According to Clement of Alexandria (d. A.D. 215), “By thus receiving the Lord’s power, the soul studies to be God.”²⁴¹ And in a chapter on “Why Man Is Not Made Perfect from the Beginning,” Irenaeus (d. A.D. 180) wrote, “For we cast blame upon Him, because we have not been made gods from the beginning, but at first merely men, then at length gods.”²⁴²

The doctrine of human deification existed early because it is deeply rooted in the Bible. “Be ye therefore perfect,” says the Savior at Matthew 5:48, “even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” Indeed, according to the apostle Paul, the Church itself was established to bring us to this perfection (Ephesians 4:11–13). How far will the process of perfection extend? Quite far indeed. “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if 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). We are the sons of God, Paul repeats in Galatians 4:6–7—“And if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.” First John 3:2 agrees completely. “Now are we the sons of God,” says that letter, declaring that “we are changed, when he shall appear, we shall be like him.” Again, Paul, speaking of “the glory of the Lord,” says that we “are changed into the same image from glory to glory” (2 Corinthians 3:18). The promise, says 2 Peter 1:4, is that we will be made “partakers of the divine nature.” When, at John 10:30, Jesus says, “I and my Father are one,” the Jews immediately “took up stones . . . to stone him” (John 10:31). Why? Because, with entire justification, they understood the claim to be one with God as a clear claim of deity. “For a good work we stone thee not; but for blasphemy; and because that thou, being a man, makest thyself God” (John 10:33). It would seem, then, with this episode in mind, that a promise of deification for his faithful followers is implied in the Savior’s great intercessory prayer, when he asks on behalf of the disciples “that they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us” (John 17:21). “To him that overcometh,” says the Savior in Revelation 3:21, “will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne.” How much more clearly can it be stated?

Theōsis or *theopoiēsis* can easily be traced in both biblical and post-biblical Judaism as well. “The theme of ‘becoming like one of us’ reveals itself as the lurking subtext of Judaism from Adam to Nachman of Bratslav,” writes Peter Hayman in an important study. “But how does this material square with the supposed transcendental monotheism of Judaism from the post-exilic period on? Not at all, as far as I can see!” Nevertheless, Hayman points out, “many [Jewish mystical texts] presuppose that humans can become divine and dispose of the powers of God.”²⁴³ Indeed, Jewish tradition can name at least one specific historical individual who has attained divine status, for the so-called Hekhalot literature claims “that a man, Enoch, ascended to heaven and was metamorphosed into Metatron, the ‘little Yahweh.’”²⁴⁴

The notion of deification is characteristic of Clement of Alexandria.²⁴⁵ It is fundamental to Athanasius.²⁴⁶ Indeed, so pervasive was it in the fourth century that it was also held by Athanasius’ archenemies, the Arians, and played a vital role in the dispute between the two factions.²⁴⁷ Athanasius opposed the Arians because he feared that, in their belief, Christ’s deity was not sufficiently robust to sustain redemption as deification.²⁴⁸ Even in subsequent centuries, the doctrine of *theōsis* continued to play a central role in Christian thinking. John Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407) taught that “man can, by his own efforts, attain the likeness of God by mastering his passions.”²⁴⁹ “The chief idea of St. Maximus,” who died in A.D. 662, “as of all of Eastern theology, [was] the idea of deification.”²⁵⁰ Are we to toss out the entire Greek and Syriac patristic traditions as “non-Christian”? Perhaps some Protestant

fundamentalists would be willing to do so. But most reasonable people would find it a very strange definition of Christianity that excluded almost all Christians. And, besides, the western Christian tradition is not at all free from the doctrine of human deification, which often appears in the most unexpected places.²⁵¹ C. S. Lewis, for instance, is an author dear to many evangelical Christians. Yet Lewis's writings are full of the language of human deification.²⁵² Would anyone claim that he was not a Christian?²⁵³

“One can think what one wants of this doctrine of progressive deification,” comments the important German Protestant church historian Ernst Benz, “but one thing is certain: with this anthropology Joseph Smith is 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.” Discussing the doctrine of human deification as held by the Latter-day Saints, Benz expressly terms it Christian.²⁵⁴

One response to Latter-day Saint teaching on deification, a brief item entitled “One God: A Response to Mormon Apologists,” tries to argue that “the early Church” did not teach the doctrine at all.²⁵⁵ However, it gives examples that extend down to John of Damascus (d. A.D. 750), who can hardly be considered a representative of “the early Church.” But even its use of early Apologists like Aristides of Athens (d. A.D. 140) and Justin Martyr (d. A.D. 155) is somewhat problematic from a Latter-day Saint viewpoint, since precisely these “Apologists” were Hellenized, and were attempting to show that Christians worshiped the same God as their sophisticated pagan neighbors. This was also the position of Origen.²⁵⁶ The eminent historian Robert Wilken is helpful here, in the context of a discussion of the great third-century pagan critic of Christianity, Porphyry. “For over a century,” he says, “since the time when the Apologists first began to offer a reasoned and philosophical presentation of Christianity to pagan intellectuals, Christian thinkers had claimed that they worshiped the same God honored by the Greeks and Romans, in other words, the deity adored by other reasonable men and women. Indeed, Christians adopted precisely the same language to describe God as did pagan intellectuals. The Christian apologist Theophilus of Antioch described God as ‘ineffable . . . inexpressible . . . uncontainable . . . incomprehensible . . . inconceivable . . . incomparable . . . unteachable . . . immutable . . . inexpressible . . . without beginning because he was uncreated, immutable because he is immortal’ (*Ad Autolyicum* 1.3–4). This view, that God was an immaterial, timeless, and impassible divine being, who is known through the mind alone, became a keystone of Christian apologetics, for it served to establish a decisive link to the Greek spiritual and intellectual tradition.”²⁵⁷

Such efforts to demonstrate that the Christian God was identical to the God of the sophisticated paganism continued as long as there were pagans to impress—i.e., well into the fifth century.²⁵⁸ Yet it appears that the majority of early rank-and-file Christians deeply distrusted the attempts of these intellectuals to clothe Christianity in the garments of pagan Greek philosophy.²⁵⁹ Thus, it seems that Latter-day Saints have very good reason to be skeptical of Aristides and Justin and their fellow Apologists as spokesmen for earliest Christian beliefs. Their pagan audiences were rather skeptical as well, and for an intriguingly relevant reason: “The gods are hostile to you,” the pagans replied, “because you maintain that a man, born of a human being . . . was God . . . and you worship him in daily prayers.”²⁶⁰ This sounds rather like certain criticisms of the Latter-day Saints—except that we are seldom accused of *worshipping* deified humans.

The citation by “One God” of G. L. Prestige to express the Fathers’ position does little to silence our suspicion that it has overlooked their Hellenistic taint. God, says Prestige, has “all those positive qualities which man does not possess, the attribution of which is made by adding the negative prefix to the common attributes of humanity.”²⁶¹

Prestige is talking about the well-known Greek alpha-privative, the use of which was so notoriously characteristic of such Alexandrian thinkers as Clement, and so typical of milieu that produced Neoplatonism. Yet such “negative theology,” as it is termed, is not to be found in the Bible.

The response entitled “One God” also cites Prestige as asserting that the early Fathers did not “obliterate the distinction” between God and man. “The gulf is never bridged between Creator and creature. . . . Man remains a created being: God alone is *agenētos*.”²⁶² The point of this, of course, from the standpoint of anti-Mormon polemic, is to say that, since humans are entirely distinct and different in quality from God, they cannot possibly ever partake of real divinity. Therefore, whatever the early Christians may have meant by “deification,” it cannot, so the argument goes, have been anything like what the Mormons claim.

But “One God” is not giving the entire story. As late as the time of the Emperor Julian (d. A.D. 363), Professor Robert Wilken notes, “the term ungenerate (*agenētos*) was a point of contention among Christians. For several decades Christian thinkers had been debating whether the son was ‘ungenerated’ or ‘generated.’ If the son was generated—that is, came into existence—then he could not be divine [according to current philosophical assumptions]. Only God is ungenerated, for he exists eternally without change. At the time Julian was writing his *Contra Galilaeos* the Christians were engaged in a debate as to whether the Holy Spirit was generated or ungenerated—in other words, whether the Spirit was truly divine.”²⁶³

However, it would seem that God the Father alone remained “*agenētos*” in patristic belief. The Son is distinguished from the Father precisely by the fact of his Sonship, which, as in earthly sonship, relates him to the Father as effect to cause. G. L. Prestige makes this quite evident in one of his other books. “God the Father, who alone enjoys a being that is both absolute and underived (*agenētos* and *agennētos*), is the sole source of whatsoever deity belongs to His Word and His Spirit. The second and third Persons of the Trinity, inasmuch as their being is derivative, are subordinate to Him in respect of existence. These propositions represent substantially the position of Tertullian, and so far there is nothing heretical in affirming them. Tertullian in fact laid the permanent foundation of the Latin doctrine of the Trinity.”²⁶⁴

One of the great Christological contributions of the illustrious third-century theologian Origen was his doctrine of the Eternal Generation of the Son. Alan Richardson, the late Dean of York, provides a clear explanation of this doctrine: “God’s nature is eternally to be a Father, and therefore the Son could not have been born at a specific moment in time, but must be eternally Son. He is eternally being begotten by the Father, for the latter is the ultimate ground of all that is, begetting the Logos and creating the world and finite spirits. It is in this sense that the Son is subordinate to the Father, for whereas the Father is the Supreme Being and ground of all other existents, the reality of the Son is derived from that of the Father.”²⁶⁵

Of course, Latter-day Saints do not agree with Origen’s position. But they can afford to disagree with it. The anti-Mormon response “One God,” alas, cannot. If it wants to argue that being “*genētos*” means one cannot be truly divine, it will have to reject Origen’s position, which is also that of most if not all of the classical creeds of Christendom, since they assert both the “begottenness” of the Son and his full and complete deity.

The so-called Athanasian Creed, of the fifth century, makes things especially clear. It affirms that “the Godhead of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, is all one: the Glory equal, the Majesty coeternal. Such as the Father is: such is the Son: and such is the Holy Ghost. . . . So the Father is God: the Son is God: and the Holy Ghost is God.” However, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are distinguished precisely by their origination, or lack thereof. “The Father is made of none: neither created, nor begotten [*nec genitus*].” The situation is rather different, however, with the

Son. “The Son is of the Father alone: not made, nor created: but begotten [*sed genitus*].” The Holy Ghost’s origination is different from the Son’s, but this third member of the Trinity is no less dependent upon another—or, more properly, upon others—for its being. “The Holy Ghost is of the Father and of the Son: neither made, nor created, nor begotten: but proceeding.”²⁶⁶

This is virtually the universal teaching of mainstream Christianity. Ignatius of Antioch (A.D. 107), for example, in his *Epistles to the Trallians*, preached of a Jesus Christ “who truly was born [both to God and of the Virgin].”²⁶⁷

Tertullian (A.D. 200) taught that Christ is the Son of the Father, “his Word [Logos] who proceeded from him.”²⁶⁸

Origen (A.D. 230) said that he “was born of the Father before all creation.”²⁶⁹ Gregory Thaumaturgus (A.D. 300)

held that God the Father is “the perfect origin (begetter) of the perfect (begotten): the Father of the only-begotten Son. . . . And there is one Holy Ghost, having his existence from God.” Yet, together, Father, Son, and Holy

Ghost constitute “a perfect Trinity, not divided nor differing in glory and eternity and sovereignty.”²⁷⁰ Lucian of

Antioch (A.D. 300) said that Christians believe in Jesus Christ as “the only-begotten God . . . who was begotten of the Father before all ages, God of God, Whole of Whole, One of One, Perfect of Perfect, King of King, Lord of Lord,

. . . the first-born of all creation.”²⁷¹ Arius of Alexandria (A.D. 328) maintained that the Son was begotten of the

Father before all ages.²⁷² Eusebius of Caesarea (A.D. 325), as reported in the *Ecclesiastical History* of Socrates,

affirmed Christian belief in Jesus Christ, “God of God, Light of Light, Life of Life, the only-begotten of God the

Father before all ages.”²⁷³ Cyril of Jerusalem (A.D. 350), in his *Catechetical Lectures*, said that Christians believe in

Jesus Christ, “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the Father before all ages, very God.”²⁷⁴ Epiphanius (A.D.

374), in the *Ancoratus*, declared Christian belief in Jesus Christ, “the only-begotten Son of God, begotten of the

Father before all worlds, that is, of the substance of the Father, Light of Light, very God of very God, begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.”²⁷⁵ Epiphanius also affirmed Christian belief in the Holy Ghost,

“who proceedeth from the Father,” yet who “with the Father and the Son together is worshiped and glorified.”²⁷⁶

In a somewhat different formula, he declared Christian faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God, “the only-begotten

Son of God the Father, that is, of the substance with the Father, God of God, Light of Light, very God of very God,

begotten, not made, being of one substance with the Father.”²⁷⁷ The Holy Spirit is declared to be “uncreated,

proceeding from the Father.”²⁷⁸

References could be multiplied yet further. In the Nicene Creed (A.D. 325)²⁷⁹ and in the Nicāno-

Constantinopolitan Creeds (A.D. 381),²⁸⁰ as in most of the other materials we have cited in this connection, words

related to *genētos* and *genitus* are used to describe the Son. And even when etymologically distinct terms are used,

the meaning is much the same. The Son is both “generated” and fully divine. The Symbol of Chalcedon, dating to 22

October, A.D. 451, teaches that the Son is “perfect in Godhead,” while at the same time affirming him to have been

“begotten before all ages of the Father according to the Godhead.”²⁸¹ The Apostles’ Creed, which originated in

the sixth century or later, speaks of the Father and then expresses belief “in Jesus Christ his only (begotten) Son

our Lord.”²⁸²

The argument that humans cannot be deified because, unlike God the Father, they are not “unoriginated” would, if accepted, deny the deity of the Son, Jesus Christ. If his deity is accepted, despite his having been “generated” or “originated,” then the doctrine of human deification cannot plausibly be rejected on that score.

Some critics of Latter-day Saint doctrine make much of the allegedly unbridgeable chasm, the abyss, that separates humanity from deity. And it is true that, as the years went by, that gulf widened in the teachings of the Church Fathers. But it is not at all clear that the gulf was always there, or that it is present in biblical doctrine. And even to the extent that a gulf was seen to exist, the Incarnation of Christ was viewed, to a great degree, as bridging it. (G. L. Prestige says of the ancient theologians of Antioch that “they shrank in horror from the idea that [the incarnate Son] was not in all respects as truly kin to us as He was kin to God.”)²⁸³

Alan Richardson notes of the theologians who produced the famous Definition of Faith of the Council of Chalcedon in A.D. 451 that “they were inclined to set too great a gulf between God and man. They tended to conceive of God and man as two substances differing from each other in kind and having no properties in common. Of course we can now see that this tendency of their thought was principally due to the accommodations of their thinking to the current philosophy of their day.” Richardson credits the Chalcedonian Fathers for rejecting much of “the old Greek or pagan idea of a transcendent, perfect and far-away Deity, which underlay such heresies as Docetism and Arianism.” But he suggests that they did not, perhaps, go far enough. “If a real incarnation has taken place at all, this means that God and man cannot be absolutely dissimilar in essence, since they have been brought together in the one Person of Jesus Christ. Wholly dissimilar substances can never be brought together in such a way that a real, organic union is effected. . . . If God was incarnate in Jesus Christ, there must be that in man which is fundamentally capable of being united with Deity.” Richardson affirms, for his part, that “God and man are fundamentally akin, as is surely implied by the belief that man was made in the image of God.” And he concludes from this that “it is possible for one person to be both divine and human because God incarnate is human nature perfected.”²⁸⁴ G. L. Prestige, discussing one important fourth-century Christian thinker, remarks that “What Apollinaris says about the Heavenly Man is quite normal and orthodox. God and manhood had been united. Therefore inasmuch as God had become incarnate the two elements together are properly called man; and inasmuch as the manhood had been deified the two elements together are also properly called God (*frag.* 147 puts this point with the utmost clarity).”²⁸⁵

Now Anglican divines like Alan Richardson and G. L. Prestige would presumably have been shocked by the Mormon doctrine of human deification. We do not mean to suggest that they were crypto-Mormons. Nevertheless, in teaching—contrary to many of their opponents—that human beings are of the same race as God, Latter-day Saints merely teach what the Bible says. “Ye are gods,” says the Psalmist (82:6), “and all of you are children of the most High.” In the New Testament, Jesus expressly quotes this passage with approval, and declares of it that “the scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:35–35). In ancient Judaism, there was a continuum of divine beings, which included not only God but also the angels and archangels. “Yahweh belongs to this class of beings,” says Peter Hayman, “but is distinguished from them by his kingship over the heavenly host. However, he is not different from them in kind.”²⁸⁶ The apostle Paul tells his Athenian audience that they and he are the “offspring” of God (Acts 17:28–29). That, at least, is how the King James translation of the Bible renders the Greek *genos*—which, of course, is related to the Latin/English word *genus*. (It means “race” or “descent.”) What Paul is saying, clearly, is that human beings are of the same race or genus as God—precisely the teaching for which their critics often condemn the Latter-day Saints. This is also the doctrine that undergirds Hebrews 2:11, where that epistle says of Christ, the divine Son, and of those whom he saves that “both he that sanctifieth and the who are sanctified are all of one [*ex henos*]: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.” The doctrine of human deification follows logically from the fact that human beings and God are of the same *genos*.

It is quite true that, as certain critics of the Mormon doctrine of deification have alleged, no ancient Christian text seems to teach that God the Father was once a man, or that he advanced from the condition to his current status.

But we probably should not expect to find such a doctrine widely taught among early Christians, much less among later apostates. Recalling the revelation to him of the famous principle “As man is, God once was; as God is, man may become,” sometime around the year 1840, Lorenzo Snow testified that “I felt that I had learnt something that I ought not to communicate to others.”²⁸⁷ And, indeed, Joseph Smith himself only disclosed the doctrine to his people at the very end of his ministry—less than three months before his martyrdom in 1844, to be exact. And he seems to have regarded himself as revealing a wonderful mystery: “God himself was once as we are now,” the Prophet taught, “and is an exalted man, and sits enthroned in yonder heavens! That is the great secret. . . . We have imagined and supposed that God was God from all eternity. I will refute that idea, and take away the veil, so that you may see.”²⁸⁸

The Lord’s words to Moses may help us to understand why this would have remained a secret for thousands of years. “Worlds without number have I created. . . . But only an account of this earth, and the inhabitants thereof, give I unto you” (Moses 1:33, 35). And, relative to this earth, God was already in existence, in his exalted state, when things began. Even on a Latter-day Saint understanding, he was, for all practical purposes, *agenētos* or “ungenerated.” Analogously, when we consider the father of an ordinary earthly family, we do not consider him in his capacity as effect, but as cause, not as begotten, but as begetter. He may be—certainly he is—the son of another father, but that is not relevant to our consideration of the nuclear family as such.

Besides, it is not the *agenētos* Father to whom we are to look as our model of deification—not, at least, as the doctrine of *theōsis* was taught among the early Christians. Rather, it is the Son who is, in this as in so many other respects, our forerunner and ideal. “Let this mind be in you,” wrote Paul to the saints at Philippi (2:5–6), “which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to equal with God.” In that sense, it is irrelevant whether or not early Christians had a view of the Father as having come to be. For the full deity of the begotten Son was quite enough to sustain a doctrine of human deification.

Related to this issue of *theōsis* is the charge that Mormons are not Christian because their God is “mutable,” while the God of Christianity is “immutable.”²⁸⁹ The God worshipped by the Latter-day Saints seems to be in process, while many mainstream Christian theologians would insist that God is beyond change. But isn’t this rather tenuous ground upon which to declare people non-Christian? Recent academic articles with titles like “The Pagan Dogma of the Absolute Unchangeableness of God” would suggest that it is.²⁹⁰ After all, the venerable notion of the “Unmoved Mover” comes not from the Bible but from Aristotle, however deeply it may have rooted itself in scholastic theology. And it is not at all clear that a theory of unchanging divinity can be reconciled with the God disclosed in biblical revelation. “Of all the current debates about the divine attributes,” writes the evangelical philosopher of religion Ronald Nash, “the disagreement over the property of immutability is the most heated.”²⁹¹

The Anglican church historian Alan Richardson labels the notion that the Supreme Being is “utterly impassible and transcendent” a “pagan idea of God,” and links it with the rise of the Arian heresy in fourth-century Alexandria. “The Arians, holding the pagan view of God as unknowable, impassible, unchangeable and unreachable, could not conceive of the Incarnation of such a being. God could have no direct relationship with the world. Moreover, there could be one Supreme Being of such a kind, and therefore Christ must be a subordinate, created Deity, a mediator between the unknowable Godhead and the world. The Arian Christ was thus neither properly God nor properly man, but a mean between the two; he was not an Incarnation of God but a creature of God’s. Certain consequences follow from the Arian conception of God. [Among these consequences is the fact that] no incarnation of God is possible, if God be the God of Greek philosophy, since no man can be the vehicle of that which transcends all human experience.”²⁹²

A further corollary claimed for the doctrine of human deification by anti-Mormons is that the Latter-day Saints do not view Jesus as uniquely divine.²⁹³ Such an assertion is fundamentally misleading. The phrase, “only begotten Son,” for example, occurs with its variants at least ten times in the Book of Mormon, fourteen times in the Doctrine and Covenants, and nineteen times in the tiny Pearl of Great Price. Surely this by itself should suffice to demonstrate the uniqueness of Jesus in Latter-day Saint scripture and theology. However, Mormons will confess to taking seriously such passages as Psalm 82:6, John 10:33–36, and Philippians 2:5–6. Were the authors of these passages (including Jesus himself) truly Christians? It does not seem that a hope for human deification can disqualify believers in Jesus from being Christians. After all, the Origenist monks at Jerusalem divided over this very question, “whether all men would finally become like Christ or whether Christ was really a different creature.”²⁹⁴ And both Origenists and Origen himself are always described as Christian.

Indeed, if the Latter-day Saints were inclined to do so, they could point out that they alone, among contemporary followers of Jesus, seem to possess the ancient Christian doctrine of *theōsis*. And they might be entitled to wonder if those who lack it can truly be considered Christian. However, this would be to engage in the same illegitimate semantic game as do the anti-Mormons.

Claim 5. “It is an established doctrine of the LDS Church that the Holy Ghost is a spirit in the form of a man, who has size and dimensions, who does not fill the immensity of space, and cannot be everywhere present in person at the same time, and is different from the Holy Spirit. . . . But the Bible teaches, and Christians through the ages have affirmed, that the Holy Ghost and the Holy Spirit are one and the same, and, being part of the nature of the one true God, does [sic] indeed fill the immensity of space and is [sic] indeed everywhere present.”²⁹⁵

Response. Even if we accept this statement, which forms a part of Ed Decker’s petition against the LDS church, as an adequate summary of Mormon doctrine on the subject—among the false impressions given is that, in Mormonism, the Holy Ghost is not divine, and that the influence of the Spirit is not everywhere present—one is immediately struck by the problematic character of its assertions about “Christianity.” According to an eminent Jesuit theologian, the late Karl Rahner, “The teaching on the Holy Spirit developed very slowly in the faith of the Church. . . . Pneumatology always lagged behind Christology.”²⁹⁶ We have already noted above that many of the earliest Christian writers could actually be described as “binitarians,” as believers in a Godhead of only two members, the Father and the Son, rather than of three. This is not surprising, since, as E. F. Scott notes, “in the New Testament there is no direct suggestion of a doctrine of the Trinity. The Spirit is conceived as an impersonal power by which God effects His will through Christ.”²⁹⁷ Even if Scott’s reading of the New Testament is not wholly accurate, it at least shows a way in which the documents could be read, and suggests why early Christian views of the third person of the Godhead were slow to develop. At least as late as the latter part of the third century, formal doctrine on the Holy Spirit—including its relationship to God and Christ—was basically unarticulated.²⁹⁸

“In general,” writes Karl Rahner, “Scripture speaks more of the Spirit’s function in our salvation than of his nature.”²⁹⁹ This is, of course, just what one would expect from an as yet largely un-Hellenized religious movement such as primitive Christianity—or Mormonism, for that matter. In earliest Christianity before its Hellenizing, and in Semitic Judaism and Islam even to the present day, heavy emphasis is placed rather on law and on history than on theology, on practice rather than on theory. It was only later that, as Edwin Hatch pointed out, the metaphysical and speculative Nicene Creed replaced the ethically and behaviorally oriented Sermon on the Mount as the central Christian text.³⁰⁰ And the supplanting of an ethical emphasis by a speculative one was, on the whole, the source of great problems in Christendom, in the matter of the nature of the Holy Spirit as elsewhere. “The precise

relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son is nowhere stated in Scripture, and it has caused discussion and even division in the church.”³⁰¹

But it is vitally important to recall that this development was late, and that it is a very questionable procedure to expel the Latter-day Saints from Christendom on the basis of questions that did not even arise until centuries after the death of Christ and the apostles. Only after about 360 A.D. did the doctrine of the Spirit become a matter of acute controversy. A group of theologians known as Macedonians or Pneumatomachi (“Spirit Fighters”), while maintaining the full divinity of the Son, denied that of the Spirit. That they did so with at least some biblical plausibility is demonstrated by the comment of one standard reference work, which says that they “were characterized by an overliteral interpretation of the New Testament.”³⁰² Finally, in 381 at the Council of Constantinople, their position was repudiated. Shortly thereafter, they fell victim to massive imperial persecution, and the standard trinitarian view of the Holy Spirit received general acceptance.³⁰³

Even within that standard view, however, there are crucial disagreements. The main reason for the schism between Eastern and Western Christendom, for example, was a dispute over the relationship of the Spirit to the Father and the Son—evidently caused by a copyist’s mistake. Which view of the “Filioque” clause is the “Christian” one? What is the “Christian” stance on “the Double Procession of the Holy Spirit?”³⁰⁴ Of course there is no single “Christian” position on the metaphysics of the Spirit. There is no single “Christian” position on any metaphysical issue. The earliest Christians knew nothing of metaphysics. Only with the progressive Hellenization of the church did such issues come to be seen as vital. But even in today’s Hellenized Christendom, nobody thinks to deny the Christianity of the Pneumatomachi nor that of their leader, Eustathius of Sebaste.³⁰⁵

Thus, although the Pneumatomachi denied the deity of the Holy Ghost they are recognized as Christian. Yet Mormons, who affirm the deity of the Holy Ghost, are said to be non-Christian simply because they vary somewhat from standard trinitarianism in their pneumatology. Latter-day Saints are held to a theological standard never stipulated by any reputable scholar as a requirement for Christian legitimacy, a standard which was wholly unknown to the first four centuries of Christianity, and which has, frankly, no demonstrable relevance to the term “Christian.”

Claim 6. Christianity teaches creation *ex nihilo*. Mormonism does not. Therefore, Mormonism is not Christian.³⁰⁶ “As in all nature (witchcraft) religions,” say Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, “so in Mormonism there is neither creator nor creation.”³⁰⁷

Response. “Yet medieval Jewish thinkers . . . held that the account of creation in Genesis could be interpreted to mean that God created from pre-existing formless matter, and ancient Jewish texts state that he did so.”³⁰⁸ This doctrine of the ancient and medieval Hebrews is precisely the same doctrine as that taught by Mormon texts such as Abraham 3:24–4:1. It is highly doubtful that the doctrine of *ex nihilo* creation is to be found in Genesis or anywhere else in the Old Testament.³⁰⁹ There is good reason to believe that the doctrine was “far from being commonly accepted” by the classical rabbis.³¹⁰ “We have to wait until the second half of the second century to find unambiguous Christian statements of creation *ex nihilo*.”³¹¹ The fact is that among rabbinic Jews of the ancient and medieval periods, and among Christian Fathers of the second century, there were those who affirmed a creation from preexistent matter.³¹² It is a very strange definition of Christianity which would redefine the Church Fathers of the second century as pagan adherents of a “nature” religion and accuse them of “witchcraft.”

Should Mormons be driven from Christianity over a doctrine so ambiguously attested in the earliest church?

Clearly, no. (Incidentally, some militant anti-Catholics argue that Roman Catholicism is witchcraft.)³¹³

Claim 7. The Mormon doctrine of the premortal existence of souls is not Christian, reports G. H. Fraser.³¹⁴

Response. This charge is hardly plausible, however, since even Fraser himself mentions that “Origen and others” taught it.³¹⁵ Origen of Alexandria is always described as a Christian. He is always ranked as a “Christian scholar, teacher, and thinker,” and indeed as “one of the greatest of all time.”³¹⁶ Nevertheless, sounding the newly fashionable theme of Mormon Hinduism—a marvelously effective method of guilt by theological association—Fraser terms this unusual Mormon teaching “reincarnation.” Gerald B. Stanton pulls essentially the same trick, falsely equating the Mormon doctrine of premortal existence of spirits with Hindu reincarnation, and then condemn the doctrine for implying something about God’s judgment that it does not imply and that Latter-day Saints deny—only because Hindu *karma*, associated with the doctrine of reincarnation but totally foreign to Mormon belief, would imply such an idea.³¹⁷

Such antics raise an important question, one that may already have been in readers’ minds long before now. We have seen that the arguments advanced by anti-Mormons are often unreliable, but can their audience even rely on their “facts”? Sadly, the answer is often “No.” G. H. Fraser’s book is, for instance, not only rather heavy-handed, but often wildly inaccurate. In this regard, as in others, anti-Catholicism and anti-Mormonism are intimately related.³¹⁸ Catholic writer Karl Keating speaks of “the way fundamentalist opponents of the Church bend facts to the snapping point. Little printed by professional anti-Catholics—those who make their living by attacking ‘Romanism’—can be taken at face value. The reader cannot assume blithely all is on the up and up.”³¹⁹

So it is in this case. Mormonism teaches nothing remotely like the doctrine of Hinduism. Indeed, Joseph Smith denounced the theory of reincarnation as being “of the devil.”³²⁰ Fraser may even be aware of this, for, perhaps realizing that even the most superficial acquaintance with real Hinduism would reveal his analogy between it and Mormonism to be ludicrously inappropriate, he redefines “reincarnation” in such a way that his accusation loses all of its force.³²¹

Claim 8. “Mormonism is a ‘cult’ and not a Christian church or denomination, because it is built entirely on Joseph Smith.”³²² “I chose Jesus over Joseph,” says one Ex-Mormon for Jesus.³²³

Response. Surely this accusation is somewhat odd. Even if we grant for purposes of discussion that Mormonism is built upon the account of God and Christ given by Joseph Smith, how does that make it inferior to traditional Christianity, which claims to be built upon the accounts of God and Christ given by Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Simon bar Jonah, and Saul of Tarsus?³²⁴ Both Mormon Christianity and traditional Christianity appeal to the authority of certain men who are believed to have possessed supernatural insight. The difference is that Latter-day Saints are open to insights from recent and even still living prophets, while their critics accept only prophets who have long been dead. In fact, ordinary Latter-day Saints believe that even they have direct access to God and the Spirit, and that they are not entirely dependent merely upon the records of ancient people who claimed such access. Thus, while Mormonism encourages personal revelation and the seeking of testimony through prayer, it appears that its fundamentalist opponents restrict the pursuit of religious truth to biblical exegesis.³²⁵

But this appearance may be deceiving. It can be argued that fundamentalists, too, take their guidance from living human sources as well as from dead prophets. Protestant theologian Lloyd Averill makes this point well: “Given fundamentalism’s authoritarian character, it succumbs regularly and readily to the cult of personality. For Protestant fundamentalists, the Bible is the professed source of authority for faith and life. The difficulty is that the Bible does not interpret itself authoritatively. Given the symbolic and poetic nature of much that it contains and its consequent opaqueness for even the most devout general reader, an authoritative Bible requires an authoritative interpreter, presumably gifted and authorized by the Holy Spirit, who can read its signs and penetrate its mysteries for the saving edification of ordinary believers not gifted with that kind of putative insight. So the leader is the essence of the movement—shapes its persona, gives it legitimation, infuses it with his own rhetorical power. This is the significance of the following that gathers around such television personalities as Oral Roberts, Jimmy Swaggart, Jerry Falwell, Kenneth Copeland, Pat Robertson. For such audiences, coherence comes not from a common creedal confession, as in the Reformed churches, nor from a prayer book, as in the Anglican Communion, nor from a history of witness, as among Friends—not even from the Bible itself, given the uninterpreted confusion of its voices. What provides coherence is the spirit-filled interpreter, who can tell the faithful authoritatively just how things are in the mind of God.”³²⁶

The difference between the Mormons and their fundamentalist critics on this point is not that the Latter-day Saints look to modern men for help in understanding the Bible and their religion, while conservative Protestants listen to the pure teachings of the Bible itself. The difference is not merely that the Mormons admit their reliance upon authoritative living teachers, while their “Bible-believing” critics do not realize—or pretend not to realize—that they are doing exactly the same thing. The real difference is that Latter-day Saints look to prophets who claim modern-day divine revelation of the same nature and authority as that received by the biblical writers themselves, while fundamentalist anti-Mormons rely upon men who do not even *pretend* to revelation.

But Latter-day Saints vigorously reject the accusation that their religion is “based entirely on Joseph Smith.” They fully accept the writings of ancient prophets and apostles in both the Old and New Worlds. They see rich biblical evidence for their beliefs, and see themselves as members of the ancient Church restored, as citizens of modern-day Israel. Where their adversaries accept dead prophets but reject living ones, Mormons are free to learn from both.

The April 1991 *Evangel*, published by Oklahoma-based Utah Missions Incorporated, offers an amusing argument on this issue. “Who was Joseph Smith?” the paper asks rhetorically. “He was to Mormonism what Christ is to Christianity! If it had not been for Christ there would have been no Christianity, if it had not been for Joseph Smith there would have been no Mormonism. . . . If Joseph Smith is to Mormonism as Christ is to Christianity—and Joseph Smith and Christ are not one and the same—then Mormonism must not be Christian!”³²⁷ But Joseph Smith’s relationship to Mormonism is not identical to the relationship between Christ and Christianity, except in the bare sense that Jesus founded the early Church and Joseph Smith was the earthly founder of the latter-day Church. The differences between their roles are numerous and essential, as the editors of *The Evangel* know full well. Joseph Smith does not atone for Mormon sins. He is not a redeemer; he is not divine. A paraphrase of *The Evangel*’s argument will be sufficient to show its weakness. “Who was Martin Luther? He was to Lutheranism what Christ is to Christianity! If it had not been for Christ there would have been no Christianity, if it had not been for Martin Luther there would have been no Lutheranism. . . . If Martin Luther is to Lutheranism as Christ is to Christianity—and Martin Luther and Christ are not one and the same—then Lutheranism must not be Christian!” Given such arguments, could Calvinism survive as “Christian”? Would the Mennonites or the Wesleyan Methodists or the Swiss Evangelical Reformed Church (founded by Zwingli) or the Campbellites pass such a test? Had it not been for Henry VIII, would there be a Church of England?

Claim 9. Mormonism is a non-Christian cult because it believes that salvation is in some sense mediated through a church.³²⁸ Real Christians know that salvation is not achieved through any denominational affiliation.³²⁹ Real Christians know that it is the “invisible church,” the fellowship of the truly born-again, which is crucial: “One who has not been the object of the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit [is] therefore . . . not a Christian.”³³⁰ Real Christians are not obsessed with priesthood and ordinances and hierarchy and ecclesiastical structure; they are opposed to sacerdotalism.³³¹

Response. But who is being most true to the biblical evidence? “The term *ekklesia*,” notes J. P. Meier, “certainly means for Matthew the church as a visible structure and society, having authoritative officials and authoritative functions.”³³² Was the evangelist Matthew a Christian? It would be an odd definition of the term that excluded him. And the New Testament nowhere defines “Christians” as only those who have been “born again.” It knows nothing of such a vintage Protestant equation since, in fact, as we have already demonstrated above, it does not define the term “Christian” at all.³³³

By the anti-ecclesiastical standards of our “experts,” Ignatius of Antioch—perhaps the most influential of the “Apostolic Fathers”³³⁴—was most definitely not a Christian. For him, alas, Church, sacraments, and bishop were vital to Christianity.³³⁵ “Let us then,” he writes to the Ephesians, “be careful not to oppose the bishop, that we may be subject to God.”³³⁶ “We must regard the bishop as the Lord himself.”³³⁷ To the Magnesians, he writes that the bishop presides “in the place of God.”³³⁸ “Let all respect the deacons as Jesus Christ, even as the bishop is also a type of the Father, and the presbyters as the council of God and the college of Apostles. Without these, the name of ‘Church’ is not given.”³³⁹ For the *Shepherd of Hermas*, too,—a second century document which is counted among the “Apostolic Fathers”—the Church is of essential importance.³⁴⁰ And similar citations could be given to literally scores of early Christian documents. Many of the most bitter debates in earliest Christendom, in fact, presumed the necessity of affiliation with the proper ecclesiastical body.³⁴¹ We are therefore led to ask the obvious question: Were early Christians “non-Christian”? If concern with membership in a visible, institutional church disqualifies the Mormons from being Christian, then it must, for consistency’s sake, exclude the early Christian Fathers as well.

However, it is not merely *ancient* Christians who would be purged from Christendom by this particular anti-Mormon rule. Hundreds of millions of contemporary believers in Jesus would meet a similar fate, for, as the ex-Catholic Stella Ciampa points out, churches do not save³⁴²—by which she, along with many other fundamentalist Protestants, means to say that ordinances and rituals and priesthood and institutions are not necessary for salvation. Let us first of all consider the various branches of Orthodox Christianity, which include Russian, Greek, Armenian, Coptic, and other varieties. Reporting on a dialogue between Lutherans and the Eastern Orthodox churches, W. G. Rusch has noted that, for the latter, a specific hierarchical organization is “essential for the church.”³⁴³ There are 200 million Eastern Orthodox believers.³⁴⁴ Surely any definition of Christianity which would make non-Christians of them must be dismissed as unrealistic and bizarre.

But what of Roman Catholicism? It represents an even larger proportion of living believers in Jesus, and its views on the question under consideration here are, in some ways, analogous to those of the Latter-day Saints. For instance, “Mormons agree with Catholics that apostolic authority and succession are of crucial importance.”³⁴⁵ Indeed, the historical position of the Roman Church has been that affiliation with the church is essential to pleasing God. One need only think of the famous phrase, *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*, “Outside the Church there is

no salvation.”³⁴⁶ “A study of the New Testament,” declared Archbishop John F. Whealon in a pastoral letter, “shows the importance of belonging to the Church started by Jesus Christ. . . . It is all-important to be in union with Peter’s successor and in the Catholic Church.”³⁴⁷ Father John A. Hardon’s *Question and Answer Catholic Catechism* puts the matter clearly: “‘Is the Church necessary for salvation?’ ‘Yes, the Church is necessary for salvation.’”³⁴⁸ “All are obliged to belong to the Catholic Church in order to be saved,” according to the Baltimore Catechism.³⁴⁹ The Syllabus of Pope Pius IX asserts that “the eternal salvation of any out of the true Church of Christ is not even to be hoped for!”³⁵⁰ The Roman Church is “in its inmost essence nothing but the everliving Christ.”³⁵¹ “The Pope is Christ in office, Christ in jurisdiction and power,” declared the First Vatican Council in 1870. “We bow down before thy voice, O Pius, as before the voice of Christ, the God of truth; in clinging to thee, we cling to Christ.”³⁵² “Priests and bishops are the representatives of God on earth,” according to the sixteenth-century Council of Trent. “Justly, therefore, they are called not only angels, but gods.”³⁵³

Such statements as this draw forth thunderous denunciations from our experts,³⁵⁴ even though they have their parallels in the statements of Ignatius of Antioch (d. A.D. 117), quoted immediately above. Rome “makes blasphemous claims for her priests,” and her followers have a “slave-mentality.”³⁵⁵ “The Romish Mass,” proclaims H. A. Ironside, is a “mysterious mixture of Judaism and Paganism, and a perversion of apostolic teaching.”³⁵⁶ Rev. Donald F. Maconaghie refers to the “blasphemy” of “the unbiblical, unscientific black magic of the Roman mass.”³⁵⁷ “And so, my dear Roman Catholic friend,” admonishes Wes Thompson, “the next time you go to Mass . . . don’t you just assume everything is just fine. Because you are attending an idolatrous ceremony and anyone who is a practicing idolator cannot enter the kingdom of heaven.” In Thompson’s view, it is clear, Catholics are bound for hell.³⁵⁸ “True Christians must never have unity with those who bow to idols, such as Catholics,” warns one active Protestant ministry. “Rather, we must win them to Christ. . . . A Catholic, once born again, can never return to the idolatrous sacrifice of the Mass.”³⁵⁹

Not all critics of Latin Christianity are so forthright. Some conservative Protestants, intimidated by the sheer size of the Church of Rome, allude shyly to “basic differences between Romanism and biblical Christianity.”³⁶⁰ R. P. Spittler is willing to admit that Catholics may perhaps be “nominally Christian.”³⁶¹ Many others, however, are not at all reserved. Writes J. O. Sanders: “We place Roman Catholicism at the head of the list of heresies, since it is the largest and most influential of them all. . . . No Bible-believing Christian can intelligently be or become a Roman Catholic.”³⁶² “Is the Roman Catholic Church Christian?” asks Wes Thompson. “I say that until it repents and stops practicing these heresies, it should be thought of in the same way Mormons . . . or any other non-Christian cult. However, the Roman Catholic Church makes those other cults look like pikers—and I am astounded that the real Christian community tolerates it.”³⁶³

Claim 10. Mormons practice baptism for the dead. But “the whole idea of a vicarious work for our ancestors is totally foreign to the Christian faith.”³⁶⁴ Clearly, then, Mormons cannot be Christians. But it is not only the Latter-day Saint practice of vicarious baptism that enrages their critics. Mormon temple ritual in general is a point of contention. Secrecy itself, say Ed Decker and Dave Hunt, is un-Christian.³⁶⁵ “No genuine Christian church has any secret rituals; nor are there any secret rituals in the New Testament. Such things are much more appropriate to the pagan mystery religions of antiquity.”³⁶⁶

Response. The argument that baptizing for the dead is un-Christian presumes that the problem of 1 Corinthians 15:29 has already been solved, and that it has been solved in a way that contradicts the faith and practice of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. However, this is far from the case. Try as they might, commentators have been unable to talk their way out of the clear meaning of the text, which is that living Corinthians were allowing themselves to be baptized on behalf of those who have died. “None of the attempts to escape the theory of a vicarious baptism in primitive Christianity seems to be wholly successful,” observes Harald Riesenfeld.³⁶⁷ Thus, reluctant though they might be, the majority of scholars has now come around to a position very much like that of the Latter-day Saints. As the eminent Lutheran New Testament scholar Krister Stendahl has recently noted, “the text seems to speak plainly enough about a practice within the Church of vicarious baptism for the dead. This is the view of most contemporary critical exegetes.”³⁶⁸ The anti-Mormon claim that those who baptize for the dead cannot be Christian also ignores the fact that such groups as the Montanists—whom we have already seen to be universally recognized as Christians—practiced a similar rite.³⁶⁹ It would further seem to question—yet again—the Christianity of Roman Catholics: “The faithful on earth,” Rome teaches, “through the communion of saints, can relieve the suffering of the souls in purgatory by prayer, fasting, and other good works, by indulgences, and by having Masses offered for them.”³⁷⁰ It questions, too, the Christianity of one of the largest and oldest Protestant churches, the Church of England, and its related communions, who also teach prayer for the dead.³⁷¹ Can any definition of Christianity which excludes both the Roman Catholic Church and the Church of England possibly be taken seriously?

And what of the rule that secrecy is un-Christian?³⁷² It is significant to note that both of the major categories of the sacred—“sacred word” and “sacred act/ritual”³⁷³—were, under certain circumstances and for varying periods of time, maintained in secrecy in early Christianity. The eminent New Testament scholars Joachim Jeremias and Morton Smith have demonstrated that such esotericism—secrecy—was present throughout early Christianity and the religious milieu from which it grew.³⁷⁴ What has been referred to as the “Messianic secret,” the constraint placed (at least temporarily) by Jesus on his disciples, and others as well, against revealing his Messiahship is found throughout the Gospel accounts, but particularly in the gospel of Mark.³⁷⁵ Jeremias and Smith also specifically include the apostle Paul in their judgment about secrecy in early Christianity. Paul describes himself and his coworkers as “stewards of the mystery of God” in 1 Corinthians 4:1. As Smith demonstrates at length, the word “mystery” was regularly used by the early Christians to refer to secret rites or ordinances.³⁷⁶ He also states that “this [the rite of baptism] was the mystery of the kingdom—the mystery rite by which the kingdom was entered.”³⁷⁷ Secrecy is a feature found not only in the early Christian community but also in ancient Judaism, among the Essenes, and very widely in the ancient world generally.³⁷⁸ According to the historian of religions Kees Bolle, “Not only is there no religion without secrecy, but there is not human existence without it.”³⁷⁹

Critics of the early Church were not slow in noticing this penchant for secrecy. And, like today’s anti-Mormons, they were quick to exploit it in their attacks. “The cult [!] of Christ,” declared a second-century anti-Christian named Celsus, “is a secret society whose members huddle together in corners for fear of being brought to trial and punishment.”³⁸⁰ “Why,” demanded Caecilius Natalis in the early third century, “do they endeavor with such pains to conceal and to cloak whatever they worship, since honourable things always rejoice in publicity, while crimes are kept secret? . . . Why do they never speak openly, never congregate freely, unless for the reason that what they adore and conceal is either worthy of punishment, or something to be ashamed of?” “Assuredly this confederacy ought to be rooted out and execrated,” Caecilius declared. “They know one another by secret marks and insignia. . . . Certainly suspicion is applicable to secret and nocturnal rites.”³⁸¹ The Christians defended themselves against

such charges much the way today's Latter-day Saints do: They affirmed the high morality of their faith and the behavior it asked of them, but they did not deny that secrecy was a part of their religious belief. And, furthermore, they did not fall into the trap of revealing the secrets that had been entrusted to their care—even when revealing those secrets might have strengthened their defense. “God orders us in quietness and silence to hide His secret,” wrote Lactantius in the fourth century, “and to keep it within our own conscience. . . . For a mystery ought to be most faithfully concealed and covered, especially by us, who bear the name of faith. But they accuse this silence of ours, as though it were the result of an evil conscience; whence also they invent some detestable things respecting those who are holy and blameless.”³⁸²

For such secret doctrines and practices lay at the very heart of the doctrine that the early Christians had received, and that they were trying against great odds to preserve. We have seen already that Ignatius of Antioch held secret doctrines early in the second century. He himself explained one of the reasons for this. “For,” he wrote to the Trallian saints, “might not I write unto you of things more full of mystery? But I fear to do so, lest I should inflict injury on you who are but babes [in Christ]. Pardon me in this respect, lest as not being able to receive their weighty import, ye should be strangled by them.”³⁸³ At the end of the second century, Clement of Alexandria advised keeping certain teachings from “the multitude” because, while “those of noble nature” find them “admirable” and “inspiring,” the masses, unable to understand such doctrine, would regard them as “ludicrous.”³⁸⁴ Early in the third century, the Latin church father Tertullian could write that the apostles “did not reveal all to all men, for . . . they proclaimed some openly and to all the world, whilst they disclosed others [only] in secret and to a few.”³⁸⁵ At the same time, Hippolytus was writing about secrets to be conveyed by the bishop to the faithful alone—secrets that Hippolytus linked with the white stone of John’s Revelation.³⁸⁶ Secret Christian teachings are also a major theme of the *Clementine Recognitions* and the *Clementine Homilies*, which seem likewise to have originated at some point in the third century.³⁸⁷

The central doctrines of Christianity were doubtlessly well known in antiquity among Christians and non-Christians alike. Thus Origen, in responding to the ancient Christian-baiter Celsus (who has himself written a manual for ex-Christians), states: “Moreover, since he frequently calls the Christian doctrine a secret system (of belief), we must confute him on this point also, since almost the entire world is better acquainted with what Christians preach than with the favorite opinions of philosophers. For who is ignorant of the statement that Jesus was born of a virgin, and that He was crucified, and that His resurrection is an article of faith among many, and that a general judgment is announced to come, in which the wicked are to be punished according to their deserts, and the righteous to be duly rewarded? And yet the mystery of the resurrection, not being understood, is made a subject of ridicule among unbelievers. In these circumstances, to speak of the Christian doctrine as a *secret* system, is altogether absurd.”

But, to forfend the charge that he is disingenuously claiming that the Christians had no doctrines not made generally known, Origen continues: “But that there should be certain doctrines, not made known to the multitude, which are (revealed) after the exoteric ones have been taught, is not a peculiarity of Christianity alone, but also of philosophic systems, in which certain truths are exoteric and others esoteric. Some of the hearers of Pythagoras were content with his *ipse dixit*; while others were taught in secret those doctrines which were not deemed fit to be communicated to profane and insufficiently prepared ears. Moreover, all the mysteries that are celebrated everywhere throughout Greece and barbarous countries, although held in secret, have no discredit thrown upon them, so that it is in vain that he endeavors to calumniate the secret doctrines of Christianity, seeing he does not correctly understand its nature.”³⁸⁸

This latter quotation is also interesting since its argument is essentially *tu quoque*: we may do it, but so do you. It cites, apparently without embarrassment, the Greco-Roman mysteries whose secrecy provides parallels to the secrecy with which some Christian doctrines were maintained.

As we have noted above, rites were also maintained in secrecy in the early Church. The ancient Christian *arcani disciplina* (secret discipline) was the “practice of . . . keeping certain religious rites secret from non-Christian and catechumens.”³⁸⁹ The very word from which “mass” may be derived, *missa* (in the phrase *missa est*), appears to have been the point in the Christian worship service when those who were not yet members in full standing were “invited . . . to leave the church building. Then the doors were closed, and the ushers assumed their places in order to inquire of anyone who still desired to enter if he was baptized.”³⁹⁰ The practice of the *arcani disciplina*—including exclusion from participating in the Eucharist, from the baptismal service, and from other rites as well—persisted through several centuries, probably from the end of the second century until the end of the fourth or the beginning of the fifth century. According to Mulder, the early Church may have had certain secret practices that were not to be made known under any circumstances, whose secrecy were sometimes maintained by an oath.³⁹¹

As late as the fourth century, efforts were being made within the church to return to the earlier, lost, Christian tradition of esotericism.³⁹² The motivation was “a concern to keep the most sacred things from profanation”—a concern shared by the Latter-day Saints, and shown by such anti-Mormon efforts as the film *The God Makers* to be wholly justified.³⁹³ Athanasius, for example, angrily notes that the people he views as apostates “are not ashamed to parade the sacred mysteries . . . even before the heathens: whereas, they ought to attend to what is written, ‘It is good to keep close the secret of the king;’ and as the Lord has charged us, ‘Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine.’ We ought not then to parade the holy mysteries before the uninitiated, lest the heathen in their ignorance deride them, and the catechumens [i.e., investigators] being over-curious be offended.”³⁹⁴ Likewise, Basil of Caesarea reminds his readers of the “unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation.” The apostles and fathers of the church, Basil continues, “laid down laws for the Church from the beginning [and] thus guarded the awful dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is bruited abroad at random among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices.”³⁹⁵ Jeremias argues that this concern with preserving sacred things from mockery was the very motive that led the writer of the Gospel of John consciously to omit an account of the Lord’s Supper, “because he did not want to reveal the sacred formula to the general public.”³⁹⁶

We have seen that esoteric or secret teachings were an important component of Christianity in its early centuries. The fact that such teachings are clearly absent from mainstream Christianity today may explain, to a large degree, why some anti-Mormons are so irritated by Latter-day Saint claims to possess them. If we don’t have those secret teachings, the reasoning seems to run, then they must not be important. Certainly they aren’t essential; perhaps they are even evil. (One is reminded of Aesop’s fable about the fox and the “sour grapes.”) This is manifestly not the way in which early Christians thought of their own esoteric doctrines, however. They treasured them.

But fundamentalist anti-Mormons have announced that claims of secret doctrine bar us from being Christians. Do such claims also excommunicate the early saints? Was John a Christian? Was Paul? Was Jesus? If a definition of Christianity that excludes Roman Catholicism seems rather absurd, what of a definition that excludes Jesus himself?

Claim 11. Mormons are not Christians because they do not accept the Bible as their sole authority in faith and doctrine, but claim other sources.³⁹⁷ “To the Mormons,” says J. O. Sanders, speaking for them, “the Bible is not the sole and infallible Word of God but only a convenient tool to forward their subtle and misleading teaching.”³⁹⁸ “Dr.” Walter Martin helpfully points out that “the Bible is only a convenient tool by which they attract attention to their subtle and ever-misleading dogmas of deception.”³⁹⁹ Orthodox Christianity teaches that “the Bible is the inspired, authoritative, inerrant Word of God.”⁴⁰⁰ But Mormons believe the Bible contains errors. Therefore, they are not Christians.⁴⁰¹ “Mormons rely on the ‘revelations’ of the authorities,” complains Robert McKay. “Christians rely on the revelation of God in His written Word.”⁴⁰²

Response. But what is the Bible, if it is not the writings and revelations of “authorities” from an earlier day? Is being ancient and dead really the chief requirement for true prophethood or apostleship? “Woe unto you,” declared Jesus to the critics of his day, “scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous, and say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets” (Matthew 23:29–30). “Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them” (Luke 11:47).

Apart from Robert McKay’s rather frivolous complaint, there seem to be two fundamental points at issue here. First, the Latter-day Saints accept a scriptural canon that is larger than the canon accepted by Protestant Christians. Second, Latter-day Saints are uncommitted to the notion of biblical infallibility. We shall examine these two issues in turn.

It is true that Mormons irritate their critics by accepting other books of scripture not included in the traditional canon. But is this enough to exclude them from Christendom? It seems odd to take such drastic action on so flimsy and uncertain a basis. The Hebrew canon had not yet been fixed in the time of Jesus. Josephus (d. ca. A.D. 100) was among the first to identify an authoritative collection of Hebrew scriptural texts. But the collection of which Josephus spoke consisted merely of the Pentateuch, thirteen prophetic books, and four books of “writings”—for a grand total of twenty-two, seventeen short of the canon insisted upon by fundamentalist anti-Mormons. Even today, there are some uncertainties as to the extent of the Old Testament canon. Do those who accept Psalm 151, found in the Greek Septuagint but not in most other versions of the Bible, commit self-excommunication? Roman Catholics and the Orthodox churches tend to accept the Apocrypha as canonical. Indeed, the conciliar decree *De canonicis scripturis*, issued on 8 April 1546 by Session IV of the Catholic Council of Trent, declares all who do not accept the Apocrypha as Christian scripture—in other words, the Protestants—to be anathema or accursed.⁴⁰³ The Greek Orthodox churches add 2 *Esdras* and 3 *Maccabees* to the Apocryphal or Deuterocanonical books, placing 4 *Maccabees* in an appendix. The Russian Orthodox add 3 *Esdras* and omit 4 *Maccabees*. The Ethiopian biblical canon, which claims links back to the fourth century, contains eighty-one books—as opposed to the traditional Protestant Bible, which contains only sixty-six. Indeed, as Loraine Boettner notes, Eastern Orthodoxy has never really settled the question of the canon—which is, of course, rather odd if that question is all-important.⁴⁰⁴ Have the Catholics and the Orthodox excluded themselves from Christendom? Are they heathens? The illustrious Athanasius of Alexandria omitted Esther from his Old Testament canon, but accepted both Baruch and the Epistle of Jeremiah. Was he a pagan cultist?

The question of the New Testament canon is very nearly as difficult as that pertaining to the Old. It is quite difficult, in fact, to see a distinction being made between canonical and non-canonical writings in earliest Christianity. Ancient evidence shows, however, that many Christian communities may not have accepted 2 Peter.

More dramatic still is the case of the Revelation of John, which was rejected by such eastern writers as Cyril of Jerusalem (d. A.D. 386), John Chrysostom (d. A.D. 407), Theodore of Mopsuestia (d. A.D. 428), and Theodoret (d. ca. A.D. 466), as well as by the mid-fourth century Council of Laodicea, and which the Armenian version of the New Testament originally failed to include. The extremely important Syriac version of the New Testament known as the Peshitta not only excluded 2 Peter and the Revelation of John, but 2 and 3 John and Jude as well.⁴⁰⁵ More interesting for our purposes, though, are the many Christians, ancient and modern, who have regarded as sacred or authoritative books that are not included in the Western Protestant version of the New Testament.

The Latter-day Saints are hardly unique among Christians in accepting an expanded canon. The so-called Muratorian Fragment, for instance, which dates from somewhere between the late second century and the middle of the fourth century A.D., shows that at least some Christians of the period accepted the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Wisdom of Solomon*. Clement of Alexandria, writing around 200 A.D., seems to have admitted a New Testament canon of some thirty books, including the *Epistle of Barnabas* and *1 Clement*—both of which he called “scripture”—and the *Preaching of Peter*. Origen called *1 Clement* a “catholic epistle,” and recognized *Barnabas* and the *Shepherd of Hermas* as authoritative. The fifth or sixth century Codex Claramontanus includes the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Shepherd of Hermas*, the *Acts of Paul*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter*. On the other hand, it omits Hebrews. Codex Alexandrinus, dating from the fifth century, includes both *1* and *2 Clement*. So does the eleventh century Codex Constantinopolitanus, which also contains the *Epistle of Barnabas*, the *Didache*, and certain texts of Ignatius. The vastly important fourth century manuscript of the New Testament known as the Codex Sinaiticus includes *Barnabas*.

Are we to conclude that the devoted monks who copied the codices Alexandrinus and Constantinopolitanus and Claramontanus and Sinaiticus were pagans? Certainly not. Such a conclusion would be absurd. Yet, like today’s Latter-day Saints, they do seem to have accepted a larger canon than that tolerated by today’s anti-Mormons. And what of Ephraem of Edessa (d. A.D. 373)? He accepted as scripture an apocryphal exchange of letters between Paul and the Corinthians, taken from the *Acts of Paul*, which is now generally regarded as spurious. Was he merely mistaken, or was he non-Christian? (Anti-Mormons should think long and hard before they start dismissing canonized Christian saints as “non-Christian.” It will make neutral observers suspicious. No clearer illustration could possibly be furnished of the fact that the denial of Mormon Christianity involves a massive, if surreptitious, redefinition of the word “Christian.”) It was not until A.D. 367 that Bishop Athanasius—he of the enlarged Old Testament—identified the present twenty-seven-book New Testament as comprising the exclusive Christian canon.⁴⁰⁶ And even then, as the various codices cited above clearly demonstrate, not everybody seems to have accepted the limits set by Athanasius.

Given anti-Mormon standards, it is not even clear that the New Testament itself will survive as a “Christian” document. The Epistle of Jude, for instance, draws heavily on non-canonical books such as *1 Enoch* and the *Assumption of Moses*. Indeed, as an eminent contemporary scholar says of *1 Enoch*, “it influenced Matthew, Luke, John, Acts, Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Ephesians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, Hebrews, 1 John, Jude (which quotes it directly), and Revelation (with numerous points of contact). There is little doubt that *1 Enoch* was influential in molding New Testament doctrines concerning the nature of the Messiah, the Son of Man, the messianic kingdom, demonology, the future, resurrection, the final judgment, the whole eschatological theater, and symbolism.”⁴⁰⁷ When Matthew the evangelist says (at 2:23) that Jesus “came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene,” he is citing a prophetic text unknown to the Bible as we have it. When, at Acts 20:35, the apostle Paul exhorts the elders of the Ephesian branch “to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive,”

he is pointing their minds toward a famous statement that does not occur in the New Testament books that we possess today. To put it bluntly, both Matthew and Paul seem to accept a canon of scriptural materials broader than that accepted today by the critics of the Latter-day Saints. This hardly bothers the Mormons, but it should give real pause to our detractors. How can they denounce us for receiving scriptures beyond their limited canon without simultaneously condemning Jude, Matthew, and Paul? Did devious non-Christian cultists manage to creep into the New Testament?⁴⁰⁸ Was primitive Christianity Christian?

To summarize our argument thus far: If acceptance of extrabiblical scriptures bars the Latter-day Saints from consideration as Christians, it must also bar the Catholics, the Orthodox, and a great many of the early believers in Jesus, including the authors of more than half the books of the New Testament.

Further, Roman Catholics even today accept “Tradition” as an authority along with the Bible, especially on matters arising after the close of the biblical canon. “Catholicism asserts tradition and Scripture as equal authorities, both being products of the Holy Spirit, who dwells supremely in the Pope, the infallible interpreter of the Christ of Scripture and tradition.”⁴⁰⁹ Rome often dismisses the idea of “the Bible alone” as mere Protestantism. (Catholic anti-Mormon W. J. Whalen, in fact, remarks that Latter-day Saints reject “the sole sufficiency of the Bible, another *Reformation* principle.”)⁴¹⁰ Rome does not hesitate to declare that the Church has priority, both logically and historically, over the Bible.⁴¹¹ “It was the Church that formed the Bible,” writes the Catholic polemicist Karl Keating, “not the Bible that formed the Church. . . . In the beginning, teaching was oral and was under the authority of the Church, which eventually decided what books belonged to the Bible and what did not.” “How,” Keating demands, “is one to know what interpretations are right? The same Church that authenticates the Bible, that establishes its inspiration, is the authority set up by Christ to interpret his word.”⁴¹² Such a critic of Mormonism as G. H. Fraser, who would thrust the Mormons from Christendom because of their belief in the authority of a Mormon prophet, compares that prophet’s authority to that of a “Romanist” pope.⁴¹³ Will he follow his insight through to its logical implication?

The Eastern Orthodox, too, reject the Reformers’ view of Scripture and tradition as competitive. Instead, they choose to see them as complementary.⁴¹⁴ Are Roman Catholics and Eastern Orthodox non-Christians? Loraine Boettner, for one, certainly seems willing to show Rome the door.⁴¹⁵ And Bill Jackson makes the point with horrifying bluntness: “The addition of blasphemous Tradition and changeable Papal teaching,” he cries, “is as bad as looking for inspiration in . . . *The Book of Mormon*.”⁴¹⁶ But if Rome and the Orthodox tradition were to be expelled, most people would perceive this as an extraordinarily strange use of the word “Christian.” Still, fundamentalist strictures on this issue are severe.⁴¹⁷ Christianity accepts the Bible alone.⁴¹⁸ But Catholicism departs strikingly from Christianity, says Jimmy Swaggart. “Obviously, church (human) tradition has taken precedence over the Word of God within the Catholic church, with awesome and eternal suffering the end product of adherence to such policies.” Furthermore, he says, “the Roman Catholic church has added books to the generally accepted Bible and has officially declared these books to be God-breathed and God-inspired—when it is obvious that they are not.”⁴¹⁹ “The Roman Catholic Church,” writes Keith Green, “has constructed one of the most unbiblical doctrinal systems that has ever been considered ‘Christian.’”⁴²⁰ According to Wes Thompson, head of Concerned Christians for Catholics, “this Church’s doctrine comes from Satan himself.”⁴²¹ So, given their assumptions, it is not surprising that many fundamentalists summon Roman Catholics, in the words of Joseph Zacchello, “to discover the errors of their church and become Christians.”⁴²²

Ephraem and readers of the Septuagint may seem dispensable to the average fundamentalist anti-Mormon, who has never met the former and may never have heard of the important ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible. Even the Catholics and the Orthodox may lightly be jettisoned. But if critics of the Mormons persist in claiming that acceptance of the modern Protestant canon of the Bible, nothing more, nothing less, is essential to being a Christian, they will soon find their sword cutting closer to home. Martin Luther is a case in point. “That Luther was critical of the scriptures,” writes Otto Scheel, “is too well known for me to have to emphasize it.”⁴²³ Luther’s critical attitude, Scheel contends, continued throughout his career as a reformer. His famous negative judgment of the Epistle of James, for instance, was repeated over a period of many years. In the “Vorrede” (preface) to his translation of that letter, he denied its apostolic authorship, and declared that it fell short of the gospel as defined by Paul.⁴²⁴ Luther characterized James as “an epistle of straw,” having “no gospel quality to it”⁴²⁵—largely, we must point out, because it seemed to disagree with his teaching of justification by faith alone.⁴²⁶ “We should throw the Epistle of James out of this school [i.e., out of the University of Wittenberg],” he declared, “because it’s worthless [*denn sie soll nichts*]. . . . I hold that some Jew wrote it who probably had heard about Christians but had never run into any. Since he had heard that Christians put so much emphasis on faith in Christ, he thought [to himself]: ‘Wait a minute! I’ll oppose them and emphasize *works* [*opera*]. And that’s what he did.”⁴²⁷ Martin Luther may never have acted on his own advice, but later reformers like Karlstadt and Oecolampadius actually wished to exclude the Epistle of James from the canon, and to give it “deuterocanonical” status instead.⁴²⁸

Luther also felt that there were “hay,” “wood,” and “straw” among the biblical prophets. Both Luther and the great Swiss reformer Zwingli mistrusted the Revelation of John (which, as we have seen, had never been accepted by the Syriac church in the first place). Jude and Hebrews were of dubious value. 2 Peter, Luther said, fell off from apostolic standards. Esther, the great reformer felt, deserved no more place in the canon than did 2 Maccabees, but 1 Maccabees should have been canonized. He preferred Romans among the epistles of Paul, for reasons that should be obvious enough, and said that John stood out among the four gospels. He did not much like the synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke), since, again, they do not emphasize his pet doctrine of salvation by grace alone. Astoundingly, Luther was willing to call the Sermon on the Mount “the devil’s masterpiece” since its emphasis on works seemed incompatible with his understanding of grace.⁴²⁹ (He enjoyed the Acts of the Apostles, however, since he imagined that book to teach his theology.) Most of Luther’s judgments, as should be clear, were based on personal theological criteria—i.e., on how well the particular book or passage suited his own beliefs—rather than on historical ones, but he was very far from being a believer in scriptural infallibility. The books of Kings, he argued, were more trustworthy (*glaubwürdiger*) than the Chronicles. On the whole, however, both Luther and Zwingli were notably indifferent to the question of biblical inerrancy in historical and other details.

The Protestant writer Lloyd Averill summarizes this point well, meanwhile bringing in yet another figure beloved among evangelical and fundamentalist anti-Mormon: “It is clear,” he writes, “that Calvin cannot be identified with the scriptural literalism affirmed by present-day fundamentalists. Nor, indeed, can any other major figure in the history of Christian thought prior to 1800. Contrary to fundamentalist claims, the doctrine of biblical inerrancy as they have formulated it is not a return to primitive Christianity or to Christian orthodoxy. Rather, it was an innovation fashioned scarcely more than a hundred years ago as a weapon to be used against the modernist movement.”⁴³⁰

Can Luther and Zwingli and John Calvin and the Syrian fathers still be considered Christian? If they can, so, on this point, can the Latter-day Saints. In fact, the claim that “orthodox Christianity” insists always and everywhere upon the inerrancy of scripture is a flagrant oversimplification. Such books as Harold Lindsell’s famous polemic, *The Battle for the Bible*, make it abundantly clear that even contemporary conservative Protestants are not at one on

this issue. Their division is not surprising, since “the Bible cannot properly be said to make a claim of inerrancy for itself.”⁴³¹ And it is not true that even all fundamentalists believe the Bible to be the sole source of redeeming truth. There are notable divisions within their own camp.⁴³² Furthermore, the Catholic Karl Keating quite properly notes that the boast of fundamentalists that they (alone) approach the Bible without preconceived notions or extrabiblical intellectual baggage is, simply, false. The difference between the Catholics and the fundamentalists on this point rests largely in the fact that Rome is aware of what it is doing, and explicit about it, while conservative Protestants tend to smuggle foreign ideas into their interpretations silently, and probably without even being aware of it themselves: Fundamentalists, Keating observes, “do not really ‘find’ their doctrines through a literal reading of the Bible. They approach the Bible with already-held views, their own tradition, one might say, and they use the Bible to substantiate those views.”⁴³³

But the anti-Mormon case does not end here. Paul B. Smith speaks for most conservative critics of Mormonism when he says of the Latter-day Saints and other intended fundamentalist targets, “If they contradict the written word of God, they are not Christian.”⁴³⁴ However, the Bible itself lays down no such rule. It cannot be repeated too often that the Bible offers no definition of Christianity at all. Besides, it is doubtful that anybody who claims to be Christian would ever willingly admit to contradicting scripture—although he might want to argue about how one is to interpret it correctly. And, as we have already noted, “conformity to scripture” is largely in the eye of the beholder. As we have outlined here in only the sketchiest and most inadequate fashion, agreement on just what is and is not contained in “the written word of God” is by no means unanimous.

Latter-day Saint writer Stephen E. Robinson makes another point that deserves mention here, one in which he takes a position very much like that attributed above to Roman Catholics. He agrees that the Church as an institution has logical and historical priority over the New Testament canon. “Since it is clear that there were Christians before the New Testament was written,” he notes, “it cannot be maintained that the Bible is what makes one a Christian.”⁴³⁵

To repeat and stress the point: There seems, on the matter of scripture and canon, to be no reason whatever to deny that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is Christian.

Go to part 3 of “Is Mormonism Christian?”

184. *The Utah Evangel* 33 (May/June 1986): 4; cf. (July/August 1986): 6; “Is Mormonism Christian?”; Tope, “The Trinity”; Decker and Hunt (1984): 110, 199–201, 256 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 33, 161–62, 257–58); “Questions and Answers”; A. A. Hoekema, “Mormonism,” in Douglas (1978): 678; P. B. Smith (1970): 67–68 (p. 67: “this cardinal doctrine of the Christian faith”); Robertson (1983): 16; Spittler (1962): 23: “the Christian conception of the Trinity”; J. O. Sanders (1962): 16; Molland (1959): 357; Tucker (1986): 48: “they do not hold the cardinal doctrines of the Christian faith, such as the trinity of the Godhead and the deity of Christ.” Mormons are said by Fraser (1977): 8, 12, to “ridicule” the doctrine of the Trinity; so also Decker and Hunt (1984): 110. Once Mormon nontrinitarianism is twisted to imply disbelief in Christ’s deity, Mormons can then be represented as disbelievers in his divinity in an absolute sense. Thus, their christology is reduced to equivalence with that of Unitarians, Jews, and Muslims. This is preposterous, but very common. See, for example, the letter from David E. Richards in the *Wall Street Journal* (24 July 1986).

185. Fraser (1977): 12.

186. *The Evangel* 38 (December 1991): 8; cf. *The Utah Evangel* 34 (July–August 1987): 8.

187. Cross and Livingstone (1983): 83; cf. the attack on the Arians by J. O. Sanders (1962): 17–18.

188. As, generally, are the Unitarians. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explicitly terms them “Christian,” despite their direct denial of the divinity of Christ. At most, the *Oxford English Dictionary* knows one ambiguous hint from 1671 that someone may perhaps have regarded Socinianism as non-Christian.

189. Brox (1983): 171, 175.

190. The title page of the Book of Mormon declares its purpose to be “the convincing of the Jew and Gentile that Jesus is the Christ, the Eternal God.”

191. Stendahl (1978): 139–54. This volume in which this essay appears is a fascinating collection of papers by eminent non-Mormon theologians, biblical scholars, and historians—Jewish and Christian—examining Mormon belief and practice in the light of their own specialties. S. E. Robinson (1991): 71–79, provides a useful defense of the Latter-day Saint position on this issue.

192. As by Molland (1959): 357; Tucker (1986): 48; Martin (1955): 12, 52.

193. Roger R. Keller specifically denies that disagreement on the Trinity by itself makes Mormons (or anyone else) non-Christian.; cf. Keller (1986a): 5–6.

194. Thus, the trinitarian formula of 1 John 5:7–8—often referred to as the “Comma Johanneum”—is almost certainly a spurious insertion. So Metzger (1971): 716–18; B. Vawter, “The Johannine Epistles,” in Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy (1968): 2:411; R. Russell, “1, 2, and 3 John,” in Fuller, Johnston, and Kearns (1975): 958a; R. W. Orr, “The Letters of John,” in Bruce (1986): 1584; Alexander and Alexander (1977): 642; P. B. Smith (1970): 57.

195. Gonzales (1970): 1:117.

196. Gonzales (1970): 1:117; 1:108; Brox (1983): 172.

197. Frend (1981): 358.

198. Frend (1981): 376.

199. Dummelow (1920): cxiii.

200. E. Stauffer, “Theos,” in Kittel and Friedrich (1965), 3:108–9.

201. Hill (1982): 27.

202. McBrien (1980): 347.; cf. Barth (1936): 1:1:437.

203. See Forrest’s effective little pamphlet on the question “Are Mormons Christian?”

204. In view of the definitions given of this word by the *Oxford English Dictionary* and, especially, the *Random House Dictionary*, it is probably not an inappropriate term for Mormon teaching.

205. W. Fulton, "Trinity," in Hastings (1951): 12:463.

206. See, for example, Cross and Livingstone (1983): 1396, where tritheism is implicitly regarded as Christian. Also M'Clintock and Strong (1867–91): 10:558; Campenhausen (1960): 6:1043–44. The *Oxford English Dictionary* contains no denial that tritheism is Christian. The opposite extreme from tritheism is perhaps Sabellianism. Yet we located no denials that it was Christian, and Johnson (1983): 90–91, seems implicitly to grant that it was. There seems, thus, to be wide latitude within Christianity—as the term is commonly used by both laymen and experts—for variant views on the Godhead.

207. Cross and Livingstone (1983): 1396.

208. For example, by Husik (1970): 247; Peters (1968): 10; Peters (1973): 295; Merlan, "Alexandrian School," in P. Edwards (1967): 1:76; S. Sambursky, "Philoponus, John," in P. Edwards (1967): 5:156; Kraft (1966): 310–11. Further examples would be redundant. The reader will find no contrary opinions. A famous American anti-trinitarian was Ralph Waldo Emerson; cf. Treadgold (1979): 210.

209. *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:27–10:9.

210. Swaggart, "What is Meant by the Trinity? And When We Get to Heaven Will We See Three Gods?"

211. Brandon (1970): 450–51; cf. W. Fulton, "Trinity," in Hastings (1951): 12:462, which sees the charge as somewhat justified; Johnson (1983): 89–93.

212. Brox (1983): 174.

213. Brox (1983): 172 (translation ours).

214. Irvine (1921): 133; cf. J. R. van Pelt, "Mormons," in Jackson (1977): 8:18; Tucker (1989): 80; *The Utah Evangel* 31 (March 1984): 8; Decker, "To Moroni with Love," 6–10; cf. the attack on the Christian concept of God, quoted in Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 10, and dating from near the end of the second century A.D.

215. Martin (1985): 200–11, 213; cf. Coe and Coe (1985): 174–77; *The Utah Evangel* 31 (February 1984): 3; *The Evangel* 38 (April 1991): 4; "The Mormon Church and the African"; P. B. Smith (1970): 65–67; "Mormonism: Christian or Cult?"; J. O. Sanders (1962): 109, 113–16; "Questions and Answers"; Decker (1979): 15; "Petition"; A. A. Hoekema, "Mormonism," in Douglas (1978): 678; Molland (1959): 353. Says Martin (1985): 200: "It will be conceded by most informed students of Christianity that one cannot deny the existence of the one true God of Scripture and at the same time lay claim to being a Christian." Even granting this biblically unprovable proposition, however, Martin's confidence in being able to clearly define that "one true God" is exaggerated.

216. Decker, "To Moroni with Love," 6.; cf. Fraser (1977): 32, 36, 45, 75; Decker and Hunt (1984): 11, 234, 245–46, 259–61 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 71–72, 337, 352–53, 373–75). On this point, see the discussion of the various senses of "differences," under item number one, above.

217. Decker and Hunt (1984): 234. Contrast Scharffs (1986): 337. Such loaded language is characteristic of Decker and Hunt, as well as of their movie, *The God Makers*. Mormons never use such terminology, but it is highly valuable if one's intent is to make Latter-day Saint beliefs appear ridiculous.

218. *Mission Monthly* 13 (February 1992): 7, reprinting with approval a document from 1904. *Mission Monthly* is published by the California-based Jude 3 Missions/Utah Gospel Mission.

219. Martin (1985): 226; cf. pp. 200–11, where Mormonism is again, and for the same reason, branded “pagan.” See also Boa (1984): 69–71; A. A. Hoekema, “Mormonism,” in Douglas (1978): 678; P. B. Smith (1970): 64–65, 68; Decker and Hunt (1984): 121 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 30, 181); Robertson (1983): 14; Holzapfel (1925): 84; Molland (1959): 348, 353; *The Utah Evangel* 31 (February 1984): 3; Mormonism is, says van Baalen (1983): 159, “gross polytheism”; cf. “Is Mormonism Christian?”

220. See, for example, the defense against this charge offered by S. E. Robinson (1991): 65–69.

221. McConkie (1982): 101.

222. One of Elder McConkie's statements finds its way into John L. Smith's “Mormonism Has Another Jesus.” Smith and his Utah Missions, Inc., are in the forefront of those who consider Mormons pagan.

223. One definition for the term “Unitarian,” given in the *Oxford English Dictionary*, is “any non-Christian monotheist, esp. a Mohammedan.”

224. See Hamilton (1926): 244–45.

225. Hayman (1991): 2, 15.

226. Irvine (1921): 140; W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism”; Boettner (1986): 279–84; The Conversion Center Newsletter (May/June 1990).

227. Irvine (1921): 142–44; Ironside (1982): 24–31; Zacchello (1984): 145–55.

228. Berry (1979): 96–97; W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism”; Zacchello (1984): 113–40; Spittler (1962): 113–14; J. O. Sanders (1962): 25–26, 28; Boettner (1986): 9–10, 46–77, 456.

229. Brox (1983): 133.

230. Paulsen (1990): 105–16. The quotation is from p. 105.

231. Swaggart, “What is Meant by the Trinity? And When We Get to Heaven Will We See Three Gods?”

232. However, for starters, see the article by Edmond LaB. Cherbonnier (1978): 155–73, where a prominent non-Mormon theologian has much good to say about the Mormon position.

233. Teske (1986): 233–49, especially 242 n. 25, 244 nn. 34 and 35.

234. In our survey, we found no explicit assertions of their Christianity, probably because nobody had ever thought to deny it. But they are distinctly implied to be Christians by Brauer (1971): 70; Cross and Livingstone (1983): 106; G. Krüger, "Audians," in Jackson (1977): 1:360; M'Clintock and Strong (1867–91): 1:537; Campenhausen (1960): 1:688.

235. See S. E. Robinson (1991): 79–89, for another Latter-day Saint perspective on this favorite anti-Mormon claim.

236. Breese et al. (1985): 49; also *The Utah Evangel* 31 (January 1984): 12, and December 1984: 1, and July/August 1986: 1, 4); Decker, "To Moroni with Love," 18–19; A. A. Hoekema, "Mormonism," in Douglas (1978): 678; Fraser (1977): 31, 45, 74; "Questions and Answers"; P. B. Smith (1970): 64, 68; Robertson (1983): 15, 18; Holzapfel (1925): 85; Decker (1979): 15, 27; "Mormonism: Christian or Cult?"; Decker and Hunt (1984): 24–25, 261 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 77–79, 375–76); J. R. van Pelt, "Mormons," in Jackson (1977): 8:18; "The Mormon Church and the African"; Decker's "Petition"; cf. Boa (1984): 69–71, who, for this reason, declares that "Mormon theology is definitely not a form of Christianity." Indeed, he lists Mormonism among "Major Pseudo-Christian Religions of the West"—along with Christian Science and Seventh-Day Adventism.

237. Sackett, "A Mormon Temple Worker," 7.

238. See, for example, the index entries in Pelikan (1971) and Pelikan (1974) under "Salvation—defined as deification," as well as the appropriate index entry in A. Nygren. Probably the most complete treatment of the issue—with references and data far beyond what we are able to include here—is found in Norman (1980); cf. Beggiani (1983): 73–78, on the Syriac tradition. G. I. Mantzarides (1984) deals particularly with St. Gregory Palamas, an important fourteenth century Greek theologian, but is useful for the Orthodox tradition generally. S. E. Robinson (1991): 60–65, is a useful Latter-day Saint discussion of this issue, with references, in the light of anti-Mormon claims.

239. On Pseudo-Dionysius, see Nygren (1982): 584–88.

240. See Norman (1975); Barlow (1983): 13–18.

241. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* VI, 14. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1979): 2:506.

242. Irenaeus, *Against the Heretics* IV, 38, 4. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1981): 1:522; cf. Barlow (1983): 16.

243. Hayman (1991): 4–5.

244. Hayman (1991): 5; cf. 11–12. On notions of ascension as deification, with reference to both Enoch and to earliest Christianity, see the extensive treatment of Segal (1990): 34–71; cf. 22.

245. Butterworth (1916): 157–69; Talley, 257–62; Nygren (1982): 356.

246. Norman (1980): 77–106; cf. Manschreck (1985): 62; Treadgold (1979): 57. Boettner (1986): 82, acknowledges Athanasius as "the champion of orthodoxy at the Council of Nicaea."

247. Nygren (1982): 428, n. 3. And the Arians, as we have seen above, are routinely described as being Christians.

248. J. H. Crehan, "Original Sin," in Davis, Williams, Thomas, and Crehan (1971): 3:382; cf. Brox (1983): 189.
249. Kelly (1978): 348.
250. Pelikan (1974): 10, citing S. L. Epifanovic; cf. Nygren (1982): 428, n. 3. Nellas (1987) offers a good discussion of deification in the modern Orthodox understanding.
251. Bouzignac (1986): 8–9, offers an example of the doctrine in the Latin text of a French Christmas carol: "Cur Deus factus homo? Ut homo Deus fieret" (Why did God become man? That man might become God).
252. See, for example, C. S. Lewis (1963): 84–85; (1960b): 9; (1965): 14–15; (1960a): 38–40, 174, 187; (1973): 45. Note that the bulk of the references above are to a book entitled *Mere Christianity*; this demonstrates the centrality of the concept in Lewis's thought. We are indebted to Todd Compton and Karen Lewis for having tracked down these passages in Lewis. Barlow (1983) offers evidence that other post-Reformation authors have held similar beliefs. Apparently even Martin Luther was capable of speaking of "the deification of human nature," although in what sense or context we are unable to say; cf. Pressau (1977): 57; Nygren (1982): 734.
253. In another context, P. B. Smith (1970): 43, obviously unaware of the hideousness of the demon he is hugging to his breast, ridicules "the incredible concept that men like . . . C. S. Lewis did not understand nor preach the Gospel."
254. Benz (1978): 215–16 (emphasis in the original).
255. "One God."
256. Prestige (1940): 63. On p. 65, Prestige endorses Origen's own self-description: "Origen, and not the third-rate professors of a dying sophistry and nerveless superstition, stood in the true succession from Plato and Aristotle in the history of pure thought."
257. Wilken (1984): 151.
258. Wilken (1984): 151–52, 154.
259. Wilken (1984): 78–79.
260. Wilken (1984): 154, citing Arnobius, *Adversus Nationes* I, 36.
261. Unless otherwise noted, quotations from G. L. Prestige are taken from "One God."
262. Latter-day Saints, of course, would disagree with this formulation. "All learned men and doctors of divinity say that God created [the essential human intelligence or personality] in the beginning; but it is not so: the very idea lessens man in my estimation. I do not believe the doctrine; I know better. Here it, all ye ends of the world; for God has told me so. . . . I am going to tell of things more noble. We say that God himself is a self-existent being. Who told you so? It is correct enough; but how did it get into your heads? Who told you that man did not exist in like manner upon the same principles? Man does exist upon the same principles" (*TPJS*, 352).
263. Wilken (1984): 183.

264. Prestige (1940): 83.
265. Richardson (1990): 42; cf. 43–44, 52.
266. Schaff (1983): 2:66–68.
267. Schaff (1983): 2:11.
268. Schaff (1983): 2:18.
269. Schaff (1983): 2:23.
270. Schaff (1983): 2:24–25. (Gregory specifies that the origin of Son and Holy Ghost did not take place in time, but is timeless.)
271. Schaff (1983): 2:26. Lucian declares, of course, that the begetting of the Son was preceded by no time. He also denounces any who will say that the Son “is a creature as one of the creatures, or generated as one of the things generated, or made as one of the things made” (Schaff [1983]: 2:27–28).
272. Schaff (1983): 2:28.
273. Schaff (1983): 2:30.
274. Schaff (1983): 2:31.
275. Schaff (1983): 2:33.
276. Schaff (1983): 2:34.
277. Schaff (1983): 2:35–36.
278. Schaff (1983): 2:34, 38. In both formulae, the origination of Son and Holy Spirit is said to be timeless, and it is denied that either was created *ex nihilo*.
279. Schaff (1983): 2:60.
280. Schaff (1983): 2:57–58.
281. Schaff (1983): 2:62.
282. Schaff (1983): 2:45. Compare the various versions of the old Roman and African form of the Apostles’ Creed, dating to before A.D. 341 (Schaff [1983]: 2:47).
283. Prestige (1940): 133.
284. Richardson (1990): 85–87; cf. 88.
285. Prestige (1940): 108.

286. Hayman (1991): 5.

287. Williams (1984): 1.

288. *TPJS*, 345.

289. *The Utah Evangel* 31 (February 1984): 3; cf. A. A. Hoekema, "Mormonism," in Douglas (1978): 678; J. L. Smith; "Is Mormonism Christian?"

290. See R. B. Edwards (1978): 305–13. "It is not self-evident," wrote Lovejoy (1964): 12, "that remaining forever unchanged should be regarded as an excellence."

291. Nash (1983): 99.

292. Richardson (1990): 50–51.

293. Fraser (1977): 58–59, 62, 94; van Baalen (1983): 159.

294. Manschreck (1985): 52. So widely held was the Origenist position in (particularly Eastern) Christendom that it took hold as a minority *Islamic* viewpoint, following the Arab conquest of the old Christian lands. Ibn al-RawandÄ« makes the same charge against AbÄ« Hudhayl that Jerome had earlier made against Origen, claiming that AbÄ« Hudhayl taught that the final state of the believer would be the same as that of his Lord (the Arabic, in transliteration: fÄ« *hÄ«latin wÄ«hidatin*); cf. Seale (1964): 71–72.

295. See Mr. Decker's "Petition." We have attempted to bring the petition's punctuation into line with accepted canons of English grammar; cf. also the pamphlet "Is Mormonism Christian?"

296. Rahner (1968–70), 3:53.

297. In Ferm (1945): 344. See also G. W. H. Lampe, "Holy Spirit," in Buttrick (1962): 2:626–39.

298. Brox (1983): 171.

299. Rahner (1968–70), 3:53.

300. Hatch (1970): 1.

301. L. Morris, "Holy Spirit," in Douglas (1978): 478.

302. J. P. Kenny, "Holy Ghost," in Davis, Williams, Thomas, and Crehan (1971): 3:30: "They certainly failed to produce any theologian or metaphysician of distinction." Hardly grounds, it would seem, to bounce anybody out of Christendom. St. Peter was no metaphysician, either.

303. See Cross and Livingstone (1983): 660–61.

304. See, on these issues, Cross and Livingstone (1983): 423–24, 512–13; Elwell (1983): 524; Rahner (1968–70), 3:56–58.

305. Eustathius is plainly implied to be Christian by Williams, "Eustathius," in Douglas (1978): 357, and Davis, "Pneumatomachi," in Douglas (1978): 790; Cross and Livingstone (1983): 483; Kraft (1966): 214; Moyer (1982): 136; Brauer (1971): 313. The Macedonians or Pneumatomachi are implied to be Christians at Cross and Livingstone (1983): 1104–5; Brauer (1971): 518. Under the relevant articles, the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* "Micropaedia," 1986 ed., identifies the Macedonians as "a 4th century Christian heresy," and the Pneumatomachi as "Christian heretics."

306. Decker and Hunt (1984): 258. But see also Scharffs (1986): 370.

307. Decker and Hunt (1984): 259 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 372). So now Mormonism is a "nature (witchcraft) religion." And all along we thought it was Hindu! Or Buddhist? (Of course, it doesn't matter, since they're all alike!)

308. Goldstein (1984): 127. For further references on the subject, see Peterson (1990): 1:584–610.

309. B. W. Anderson, "Creation," in Buttrick (1962): 1:728.

310. Winston (1986): 91.

311. Goldstein (1984): 132. Goldstein (1984): 133, thinks that he has found an "unequivocal" Jewish insistence on *ex nihilo* creation in Rabban Gamaliel II, "at the latest early in the second century C.E." But see the reply by Winston (1986): 88–91. See also Hayman (1991): 2–4; F. Young (1991): 139–51. On pages 3–4 of his important article, Hayman asks the question, "Is a doctrine of monotheism conceivable without a doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*?" He thinks not, and this is one of the reasons for his denial that early Judaism was truly monotheistic.

312. Goldstein (1984): 135.

313. See the description of Rebecca Brown's *Prepare for War*, as given in the Chick Publications February 1990 Retail Catalog.

314. Fraser (1977): 85.

315. Fraser (1977): 79.

316. So Ferm (1945): 551; cf. Treadgold (1979): 9–50; Manschreck (1985): 49; Brox (1983): 157; Bruce (1979): 259; Johnson (1983): 58–59; Kraft (1966): 393–401. It is to be doubted that any contrary opinions will be found among reputable scholars. This, significantly, despite the fact that Origen was condemned by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, in Constantinople in 553.

317. G. B. Stanton, "Pre-Existence of Souls," in Harrison, Bromiley, and Henry (1960): 418.

318. The virulently anti-Catholic Chick Publications February 1990 Retail Catalog carries not only its own pamphlets against the Latter-day Saints, but also John L. Smith's *Witnessing Effectively to Mormons* (1975) and *Hope or Despair?* (1976) as well as Floyd C. McElveen's *The Mormon Illusion*. Additionally, it advertises books explaining how Jesuit priests assassinated Abraham Lincoln.

319. Keating (1988): 73.

320. *TPJS*, 105.

321. Fraser (1977): 76.

322. Morey (1983): 13; cf. Geer, “Who Is This Man . . .?”; *The Utah Evangel* 31 (March 1984): 8; (May 1984): 3; (December 1984): 12; *The Evangel* 38 (September 1991): 2; *The Evangel* 38 (October 1991): 3.

323. Decker and Hunt (1984): 245. Contrast Scharffs (1986): 350. We might note here that Dr. Scharffs’s book is, on the whole, devastating to Decker and Hunt. Not only are they inaccurate, but their inaccuracies appear to have been perpetrated in bad faith.

324. “Be ye followers of me,” writes Paul, “even as I also am of Christ.” (1 Corinthians 11:1).

325. See, for example, Decker and Hunt (1984): 115, 170 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 177–228); Tope, “Why Should I Pray”; Tope, “But I Have a Testimony.” Decker (1979): 25, mocks the idea of praying for a testimony.

326. Averill (1989): 112–13.

327. *The Evangel* 38 (April 1991): 4.

328. Fraser (1977): 87, 96, 174; “The Mormon Church and the African”; Decker, “To Moroni with Love,” 45–46, 48; “Mormonism: Christian or Cult?”; *The Utah Evangel* 31 (March 1984): 8; (May 1984): 3; (December 1984): 12; (July/August 1986): 5; Geer, “Who Is This Man . . .?”; Decker and Hunt (1984): 246–247 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 36, 354–55).

329. So O. J. Smith, “Which Church Saves?”; Bishop Ryle, “The Only True Church”; W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism”; Boa (1984): 67; P. B. Smith (1970): 24, 54–55; J. O. Sanders (1962): 16, 113; Decker (1979): 31; “Mormonism: Christian or Cult?” Berry (1979): 91, contra Roman Catholicism, writes: “The word ‘church’ in the New Testament refers to all who have personally trusted Jesus Christ as Saviour, regardless of their religious affiliations on earth.” Yet anti-Mormons consistently deny the possibility that one might be “saved” within the Mormon Church. Similarly, after much prodding and with great reluctance, a woman volunteer at the Ex-Mormons for Jesus visitor’s center, in Santa Fe Springs, California, admitted to one of the authors in the summer of 1984 that it was “impossible” for someone to become a Christian “and remain a Catholic” (and W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism,” agrees.)

330. Boettner (1986): 90.

331. Martin (1985): 199–200; Coe and Coe (1985): 180–82; Ridenour (1979): 27–51.

332. J. P. Meier, “Part One: Antioch,” in Brown and Meier (1983): 66.

333. Being “born again” is, of course, a desirable state; Alma 5, one of the most famous chapters in the Book of Mormon, deals extensively with the theme. Mormons tend not, however, to view the subject in quite the same revivalistic way as do very conservative Protestants. Nevertheless, the similarities are considerable—after all, both views have their roots in the Bible—and should not be overlooked.

334. Gonzales (1970) 1:97, has him sharing the honor with Clement of Rome.

335. See Ignatius, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 3:2; *Epistle to the Magnesians* 3:1–2, 7:1; *Epistle to the Trallians* 2:1–3; 3:1–3, 7:1–2; *Epistle to the Philadelphians* 2:1; *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans* 8:1; Gonzales (1970): 1:76–77.

336. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 5:3. English translation in Lake (1970): 1:179.

337. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Ephesians* 6:1. English translation in Lake (1970): 1:179; cf. *Epistle to the Magnesians* 2:1.

338. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians* 6:1. English translation in Lake (1970): 1:203; cf. 13:2.

339. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Trallians* 3:1. English translation in Lake (1970): 1:215.

340. Gonzales (1970): 1:90.

341. See, for example, Brox (1983): 124–32.

342. Ciampa, “Catholic or Christian?”

343. Rusch (1986): 12. Molland (1959): 358, notes that the Anglicans, too, share a certain sacerdotalism with the Orthodox tradition.

344. Rusch (1986): 11.

345. Hansen (1981): 36.

346. John Adams, writing in his diary for 16 February 1756, complained that “The church of Rome has made it an article of faith that no man can be saved out of their church”; cf. Zachello (1984): 6–7, 186; P. B. Smith (1970): 22. Official Catholic teaching leaves no doubt about how “church” is to be understood: “The Church is the congregation of all baptized persons, united in the same true faith, the same sacrifice, and the same sacraments, under the authority of the Sovereign Pontiff and the bishops in communion with him.” (See *This We Believe* [1962]: 102; cf. Zachello [1984]: 193; Molland [1959]: 358). We realize that Catholic teachings are not quite as exclusive as they sound at first hearing (cf. *This We Believe* [1962]: 130–31; P. B. Smith [1970]: 29). But neither are Mormon teachings (despite such misunderstandings as that of Holzapfel [1925]: 84; Decker and Hunt [1984]: 9. Contrast Scharffs [1986]: 67). For a good summation of Catholic thinking on the role of the Church, see G. H. Joyce, “Church,” in Herbermann (1908): 3:744–61; cf. Holzapfel (1925): 16–34. Horace Greeley remarked on this similarity between Mormon and Roman Catholic ecclesiology already in 1859. And Brigham Young agreed with him (see Greeley [1968]: 9:132). S. E. Robinson (1991): 41, correctly points out that “in the areas of priesthood, ordination, and apostolic succession, the Latter-day Saints are actually more ‘orthodox’ than Protestants, sharing the older, more traditional view with Roman Catholics.”

347. Cited in Whealon (1986): 17. Rev. Whealon is the current archbishop of Hartford, CT; cf. the “Oath of Faith for Converts” to Catholicism, cited by Zachello (1984): 170. Keating (1988): 23, dismisses fundamentalist Protestant anti-institutional feelings (discussed also on p. 89) as “unalloyed Christian individualism.”

348. Hardon (1981): 98.

349. *This We Believe* (1962): 129; but cf. 130–31. Spittler (1962): 110–11, 115–16, with eye firmly fixed on Rome, denies the need for organized religion.

350. Cited by Zachello (1984): 185.

351. Holzapfel (1925): 8–19: “Sie ist in ihrem innersten Wesen nichts anderes als der fortlebende Christus.”

352. Cited by Zachello (1984): 34. The reader may judge for himself whether this, or Zachello’s *sola scriptura* denunciation of it, resembles most closely the testimony of St. Ignatius from early Christianity. Zachello (1984): 35, further notes that on June 20, 1894, Pope Leo XIII proclaimed: “We hold upon this earth the place of God Almighty.”

353. Cited by Boettner (1986): xi

354. E.g., Zachello (1984): 11–16; W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism”; Boettner (1986): 19–74, 261, 270–97, 456–57.

355. Irvine (1921): 141, 147; cf. Green (1984d); J. O. Sanders (1962): 24; Green (1984b); Zachello (1984): 76, 102. Irvine (1921): 141–42, denounces claims that the Pope stands in for God—claims that sound very much like Ignatius speaking of the bishop, or like D&C 21:5 speaking of the Mormon prophet. Passages like the latter convince its critics that Mormonism is a “non-Christian cult.”

356. Ironside (1982): 23. Green (1984a) sees the ritual as idolatrous paganism. In terms very reminiscent of the Ed Decker school of anti-Mormonism, Green (1984b) describes the chief Roman sacrament as “a system which is not only unbiblical, but is actually steeped in mysticism, bordering dangerously on the occult!” The process by which “mysticism” became a term of reproach is not altogether clear to us. Such connotations are nevertheless common among fundamentalist muckrakers, who have, perhaps, not heard of the rich Christian mystical tradition, of St. John of the Cross, of St. Teresa of Avila, of Meister Eckhart, or of Dionysius the Areopagite. For a representative specimen of the genre, see Pat Means’ exposé, *The Mystical Maze* (cf. “Dr.” Walter Martin’s presumed exposé of the Latter-day Saints, *The Maze of Mormonism*. We should, it seems, be grateful to them for guiding us through the labyrinth). A few of our “experts” are more mild: Spittler (1962): 111, refers gently to how, in the Church of Rome, “meaningless liturgical acts were substituted for personal worship.” It is presumably better to be ineffectual than idolatrous; concomitantly, to be idolatrous is presumably to be effectual; cf. P. B. Smith (1970): 25–26, 35; J. O. Sanders (1962): 22–25.

357. Newsletter, The Conversion Center (May/June 1990).

358. See W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism.” This is a charge repeatedly brought against Mormon ritual, as well—notably by Ed Decker and followers. But aren’t we saved by grace? Nonetheless, for anti-Catholic Donald Spitz, as cited by Keating (1988): 104, Catholics are damned if they remain Catholic.

359. Chick Publications February 1990 Retail Catalog, 28, 31. On p. 8, the catalog advertises a pamphlet on the Roman Catholic mass, referring specifically to the consecrated wafer, entitled “The Death Cookie.”

360. Whealon (1986): 16.

361. Spittler (1962): 109; cf. 117.

362. J. O. Sanders (1962): 20.

363. W. Thompson, "What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism." Thompson's inventory of adjectives for Catholicism is rich. It includes "demonic," "idiotic," "disgusting," "sick," "demented," etc. It should not be mistakenly assumed that we are drawing on the lunatic fringe of fundamentalist anti-Catholicism in order to discredit anti-Mormons by association. We cite nothing from the likes of Tony Alamo. Every pamphlet and book referred to herein was obtained either at mainstream "Christian" bookstores or from mainstream "Christian" periodicals.

364. *The Utah Evangel* 31 (January 1984): 7; cf. Fraser (1977): 107–12. *The Evangel* and others simply don't like ordinances; cf. Fraser's attack on baptism: Fraser (1977): 97–106. For the quite different attitude of Christianity in late antiquity, see Brox (1983): 112–18.

365. Thus Decker and Hunt (1984): 141–42 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 200–202). Mr. Decker's "Petition," along with the materials which generated controversy a few years ago over the dedication of the Denver temple, may be taken as representative of yet another point of controversy connected with Mormon temple worship: Alleged Latter-day Saint mockery of traditional Christianity. We choose not to discuss this accusation, refusing to acquiesce in the thrusting of temple ritual into the public domain—a cherished goal of Mr. Decker and his associates. On the other hand, we emphatically deny that the effect of temple worship on any of those we know has ever been to inculcate contempt for Christian clergy. And since no Latter-day Saint known to us interprets the temple ritual as cutting Mormonism off from Christianity *per se*, we find extremely dubious the attempt by non- and anti-Mormons to portray it as doing so.

366. *Saints Alive in Jesus Newsletter* (July 1990): 5.

367. H. Riesenfeld, "Hyper," in Kittel and Friedrich (1972): 8:512–13.

368. Stendahl, "Baptism for the Dead: Ancient Sources," in Ludlow (1992): 1:97. Among the commentators, including Catholics as well as both liberal and conservative Protestants, who agree that 1 Corinthians 15:29 most likely refers to a practice among Corinthian Christians of receiving vicarious baptism on behalf of the dead, see Fee (1987): 763–67; R. Kugelman, "The First Letter to the Corinthians," in Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy (1968), 2:273; Orr and Walther (1976): 335, 337; Marsh, "1 Coirinthinas," in Bruce (1986): 1384; Mays (1988): 1187; J. J. O'Rourke, "1 Corinthians," in Fuller, Johnston, and Kearns (1975): 883h–m; W. F. Flemington, "Baptism," in Buttrick (1962), 1:350; Conzelmann (1975): 275–77. Nibley (1987): 100–167.

369. Ferm (1945): 54; Fraser (1977): 110. The Marcionites, also invariably referred to as Christians, observed the practice as well. The practice was condemned in A.D. 393, by the Council of Hippo, which certainly implies that it was still a live issue in the late fourth century of the Christian era.

370. *This We Believe* (1962): 134; cf. 134–35, 144. See Boettner's attack, in Boettner (1986): 7, 295–96. Prayers for the dead are a central motif in Dante's *Purgatorio*. Was Dante Christian? Says Jeffrey B. Russel's *Medieval Civilization*: "Thomas Aquinas and Dante were the crowns of their age" (376). "The *Divine Comedy* of Dante Alighieri (1265–1321) was the masterpiece of medieval literature. . . . [I]t is a *summa* of medieval thought. In [it], Christian theology is summarized" (552; cf. 138). But, imply our "experts," do the mediaevalists know what they are talking about? Was the "Age of Faith" in Western Europe really Christian? Perhaps Dante was a Hindu?

371. Boettner (1986): 295.

372. For another Latter-day Saint response to this charge, with useful references, see S. E. Robinson (1991): 96–98, 99–103.

373. Heiler (1961): 176, 266.

374. See Jeremias (1966): 125–37, with his copious notes; M. Smith (1973): 38, 44, 91–92, 94, 197–202; G. Bornkamm, “Mysterion,” in Kittel and Friedrich (1967): 4:802–28. For Latter-day Saint perspectives on this question, see Compton (1990): 611–42; Hamblin (1990): 202–21; Nibley (1987a): 10–99 (esp. 14–15, 30–33); Nibley (1988): 84–110; and Welch (1990): 70–72.

375. There is considerable literature on this topic and its implications for the New Testament; cf. Wrede (1971); Boobyer (1959): 225–35; Schweizer (1965): 1–8; Powell (1969): 308–10; Aune (1969): 1–31; Blevins (1981); Tuckett (1983).

376. M. Smith (1973): 179–84.

377. M. Smith (1972): 96; cf. M. Smith (1973): 178–81. K. W. Bolle, “Secrecy in Religion,” in Bolle (1987): 10–11, notes that “the Greek word *mysterion* was translated into Latin as *sacramentum*. . . . Even when referring to specific church acts, it was more than the sacraments of baptism and holy communion. . . . All these church acts are mysteria, i.e., acts in which God is at work and therefore distinct from ordinary, profane, natural occurrences.”

378. Jeremias (1966): 136; M. Smith (1973): 197–99; Wewers (1975).

379. Bolle (1987): 1.

380. Celsus (1987): 53. Much like his latter-day co-workers, Celsus even wrote a handbook of advice for ex-Christians.

381. Cited in Minucius Felix, *Octavius* X, 10, 9. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1979): 4:178, 177.

382. Lactantius, *Divine Institutes* VII, 26. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1979), 7:221.

383. Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Trallians*, 5.

384. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* I, 12. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1979): 2:312–13.

385. Tertullian, *On the Prescription against Heretics*, 25. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1980): 3:254–55.

386. Hippolytus, *Apostolic Tradition* 23:13–14, cited in Hanson (1962): 32. Compare Revelation 2:17; D&C 130:10–11.

387. See, for instance, *Clementine Recognitions* 2:4, 3:1, 3:34; *Clementine Homilies* 19:20.

388. Origen, *Contra Celsum* I, 7. English translation in Roberts and Donaldson (1979): 4:399.

389. H. Mulder, "Arcani Disciplina," in Palmer (1964): 1:390. In the numerous studies on the subject—P. Batiffol, "Arcane," in Vacant and Mangenot (1894): 1:1738–54; Bonwetsch (1873): 203–99; Casel (1927): 329–40; Gravel (1902); Hanson (1962), 22–35; Jacob (1990; this is the most recent study on the topic and contains a rich bibliography); Mensching (1926): 126–32; O. Perler, "Arkandisziplin," in Klauser (1950): 1:667–76; Douglas Powell, "Arkandisziplin," in Krause and Müller (1979): 4:1–8; Schindler (1911)—there seems to be little argument about the existence of the *disciplina arcana*. Even the most exacting—thus Hanson (1962): 22—expresses no doubt on that score, but restricts its practice to the fourth and fifth centuries. Others are more generous in this regard.

390. H. Mulder, "Arcani Disciplina," in Palmer (1964): 390.

391. H. Mulder, "Arcani Disciplina," in Palmer (1964): 390. Mulder believes that, in the taking of these oaths, "the church may have imitated" the practices of certain Eastern religions that "contained a number of secret ceremonies . . . related especially to the initiation, [which] had to be kept quiet under all circumstances by the adherents. Sometimes an oath was required at the initiation; at other times the death penalty was pronounced in the eventuality of a breach"; cf. G. Anrich, "Arkandisziplin," in Gunkel and Zscharnack (1927): 1:523–33; Bolle (1987): 10, on the other hand, sees the origins of such practices arising from within the Christian communion itself; cf. Nock (1924): 58–59; Benko (1986): 12–13.

392. Brox (1983): 134.

393. Jeremias (1966): 130.

394. Athanasius, *Defence against the Arians*, 1:11. English translation in Schaff and Wace (1979): 3:254–55.

395. Basil, *On the Spirit*, XXVII, 66. English translation in Schaff and Wace (1978): 8:42; cf. Cyril of Jerusalem, *Procatechesis* 12.

396. Jeremias (1966): 125, 136–37.

397. Decker and Hunt (1984): 44, 110, 114 (vs. Scharffs [1986]: 32, 89, 159, 176); *The Utah Evangel* 34 (July–August 1987): 8; *The Evangel* 38 (April 1991): 4; "What Is a Cult?"; A. A. Hoekema, "Mormonism," in Douglas (1978): 678; "Mormonism: Christian or Cult?"; van Baalen (1983): 145, 168; "The Mormon Church and the African"; P. B. Smith (1970): 18, 57–61; Decker, "To Moroni with Love," 17–19; Spittler (1962): 14, 22–23, 27; J. O. Sanders (1962): 110–111, 119–121; Decker (1979): 15; Johnson (1983): 434. This is the issue that, rather inconsequently, irks Barrett (1982): 57–58.

398. J. O. Sanders (1962): 119.

399. Martin (1955): 54. Note the similarity between this quotation and the one preceding it. Hugh Nibley has drawn attention to the almost incestuous polemical inbreeding among anti-Mormons; cf. Nibley's classic essay on "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book (A Handbook for Beginners)," in Nibley (1991): 474–580.

400. Ridenour (1979): 8; "Mormonism: Christian or Cult?"; J. O. Sanders (1962): 16, 28; cf. Ironside (1982): 47, against the Catholics.

401. See the discussion of this point by Forrest, "Are Mormons Christian?"

402. *The Evangel* 36 (December 1989): 3.

403. See S. E. Robinson (1991): 54.

404. See the attack by Boettner (1986): 80–87, on Rome’s acceptance of the Apocrypha.

405. Cross and Livingstone (1983): 1183; R. J. Owens, “Peshitta,” in Ferguson (1990): 719; Turro and Brown, “Canonicity,” in Brown, Fitzmyer, and Murphy (1968): 2:515–34, and Brown, “Apocrypha; Dead Sea Scrolls; Other Jewish Literature,” in Brown Fitzmyer, and Murphy (1968): 2:535–60.

406. For discussions of the variability of the canon through Christian history, see Manschreck (1985): 33; Averill (1989): 67–68; Bauer (1957): 10–11; L. M. McDonald, “Canon,” in Ferguson (1990): 169–73. On the ambiguity of early Christian notions of canon, and on Orthodox and Roman views, see, generally, M. S. Enslin, “Apocrypha,” in Buttrick (1962): 1:161–69. S. E. Robinson (1991): 45–56, also offers a Latter-day Saint response to this issue.

407. E. Isaac, “1 Enoch,” in Charlesworth (1983): 1:10.

408. On Jude, see D. F. Payne, “Jude,” in Bruce (1986): 1590–92.

409. Manschreck (1985): 2.

410. Whalen (1963): 167 (emphasis ours); cf. also Holzapfel (1925): 15–34.

411. See the statements of Archbishop Whealon (1986): 17; cf. Zachello (1984): 4, 18; Holzapfel (1925): 20, 23–37. Johnson (1983): 22, supports the view that the canonical gospels are “products of the early Church.”

412. Keating (1988): 312, 34. On pp. 312–13, Keating argues eloquently and plausibly against the notion of the Bible as the sole and exhaustive rule of faith.

413. Fraser (1977): 40. Coming from the opposite direction, Boettner (1986): 102, too, has noticed the resemblance.

414. Rusch (1986): 12. A similar view, held by a modern German church historian, is expressed by Brox (1983): 149. Further, Draper (1984), a former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, acknowledges in his book that *sola scriptura* is a Reformation doctrine—and, in doing so, reflects a sense of history and historical process that is rather rare in the conservative Protestant camp.

415. Boettner (1986): 3, 14, 24, 49, 71, 90, 98, 260, 272, 276–77, 450, 460. Of course, the real question is Does the Christian “house” really belong to the likes of Boettner? Or, indeed, to any man?

416. Cited in Keating (1988): 83.

417. Thus, Berry (1979): 89, 91–92; Irvine (1921): 140; Boettner (1986): 24, 75–103, 455–56; W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism”; Green (1984d); Green (1984a); Ironside (1982): 41–48; Zachello (1984): 12–16, 24–28; P. B. Smith (1970): 13–15, 17, 18 (where Catholics are linked with Mormons), 23; Spittler (1962): 14, 112–16; J. O. Sanders (1962): 21–22. They have been known to pronounce

excommunications from Christendom for far lesser offenses. Irvine (1921): 136–39, has an entire chapter on “Pseudo-Christianity, or Modern Religious Education.”

418. P. B. Smith (1970): 17–20.

419. Swaggart (1985b): 38.

420. Green (1984c); Swaggart (1985a): 38, 41, attacks the Catholic practice of auricular confession as unscriptural; Swaggart (1985b): 37–38, attacks the immaculate conception of Mary, her bodily assumption into heaven, the mass, and papal infallibility. The anonymous pamphlet entitled “Which Will You Believe? The Holy Scriptures, God’s Unchangeable Word or The Human Traditions of Men” [*sic*], lists, among unscriptural beliefs and practices, purgatory, confession or penance, the mass, idolatry, priesthood, prayers to Mary and the saints, and alleged Catholic claims that the Church of Rome does not change.

421. W. Thompson, “What We Should Know about Roman Catholicism.” He is echoing a charge made scores of times in the propaganda of such people as J. Edward Decker and Utah Missions, Inc., against the Mormons. It should not come as a surprise that the group’s title resembles that of “Concerned Christians,” once one of the leading anti-Mormon groups. Both emerge from the same spiritual demimonde.

422. Zachello (1984): vii.

423. Except where specifically noted, the argument of this paragraph is based upon Scheel (1902): 47–55; also Bainton (1950): 332; Averill (1989): 72–73; and Stephens (1986): 56. For a general survey of Luther’s views on scripture, see Althaus (1966): 72–102.

424. Luther (1972): 2:2454–55.

425. Luther (1929): Ser.3:6:10: “eyn rechte stroern Epistel . . . denn sie doch keyn Evangelisch art in ihr hat.” See also Holzapfel (1925): 27; Bainton (1950): 177, 331–32; T. Carson, “James,” in Bruce (1986): 1536. Some have wished to dismiss such remarks as merely “tongue-in-cheek,” not representing Luther’s real view on the matter. This, however, will not wash. Luther was too consistent in expressing the opinion, in contexts which simply cannot be written off as humorous.

426. See Lackmann (1949) for a discussion of this issue.

427. Luther (1919), 5:157. Our translation. The text from which this passage comes is a mixture of German and Latin. The switch from German to Latin in the word *opera* is reflected by our emphasizing “works.”

428. Reicke (1964): 9.

429. Luther (1906): Ser.1:32:299: “Das heist ein meister stuck des Teuffels.” Luther’s preface to his commentary the Sermon on the Mount is a wandering and occasionally ill-tempered text. Luther seems to be blaming the devil for misinterpretations of the Sermon on the Mount, but it often seems that he blames the Sermon itself.

430. Averill (1989): 73–74.

431. Averill (1989): 66.

432. Averill (1989): 43–45.

433. Keating (1988): 188.

434. P. B. Smith (1970): 20.

435. S. E. Robinson (1991): 56.