

DEFENDING

The Church of **JESUS CHRIST** of Latter-day Saints



A REFERENCE GUIDE

Wayne D. Arnett

EPHESIANS 4:11-14

11. And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;
12. For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:
13. Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:
14. That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

D&C 123:12-15

12. For there are many yet on the earth among all sects, parties, and denominations, who are blinded by the subtle craftiness of men, whereby they lie in wait to deceive, and who are only kept from the truth because they know not where to find it—
13. Therefore, that we should waste and wear out our lives in bringing to light all the hidden things of darkness, wherein we know them; and they are truly manifest from heaven—
14. These should then be attended to with great earnestness.
15. Let no man count them as small things; for there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things.

EPHESIANS 2:19-20

19. Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
20. And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

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JESUS CHRIST
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To
Sherra, Bryan, Kursten, Bobby,
Gavin, Brandon, Laura, Heidi
and Ryan (hatchetman)

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INTRODUCTION

Three days after his imprisonment at Rome, the apostle Paul invited a number of local Jewish leaders to his quarters. As they gathered, Paul was informed that they had not heard of the circumstances of his arrival, nor had they heard of any alleged crime on his part. However, they did make the following statement:

But we desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest: for as concerning this sect, we know that every where it is spoken against.

ACTS 28:22

Sect is used in this passage of scripture as an English translation of the original Greek, *hairesis*. A more direct translation, **heresy**, could have been used. Another modern translation equivalent is the word **cult**. From this precedent, and additional biblical and early Christian writings, it is quite clear that the Lord's Church might well expect to encounter pejorative references in any age.¹

PURPOSE OF THIS GUIDE

Today, a rather popular “spoken against” tactic used by critics of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is to denounce the Church using such acrimonious terms as “cult” and “non-Christian.” The objective of this kind of pejorative labeling is to instantly create a negative and shocking impression as a diversionary tactic to undermine any possibility of an open-minded investigation of LDS beliefs and tenets. This introductory reference guide is intended to help honest truth seekers obtain an accurate understanding of the LDS faith.

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Thus, it is directed to those:

- who are truly interested in the basic history and tenets of The Church of Jesus Christ. In particular, it is for those whose previous exposure to the LDS faith has been by way of so-called “anti-Mormon” criticisms.
- who have a sincere desire to investigate the restored gospel of Jesus Christ by prayerful study, but have insufficient background to readily rebut “anti-Mormon” claims.
- members of the faith seeking help in addressing questions, concerns and criticisms posed by acquaintances, friends and loved ones.
- who proclaim and perpetrate criticisms of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

JUNIUS F. WELLS (1891)

The Latter-day Saints have been so repeatedly and generally misrepresented and maligned, that ordinarily little has been done by way of refutation. Were the people to undertake to meet every lie uttered against them and set it right, they would devote the whole of their lives to it and then die without accomplishing the desired object. But there are times when a refutation is necessary; when the whole people awake in earnestness to deny the misrepresentations of those who purposely and willfully assail them.²

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A FEW DEFINITIONS

Mormon: An appellation applied to members of The Church of Jesus Christ because of their acceptance of the Book of Mormon as another Testament of Jesus Christ, in addition to the Holy Bible (Old & New Testament).

Anti-Mormon: One who opposes, attempts to find fault with, and passes judgment on the beliefs and faith of the members of The Church of Jesus Christ by way of lectures, pamphlets, books, films, etc.

Apologetics: From the Greek *apologia*, which can be translated as “defense of the faith.” Apologetics is the discipline of responding to, and defending one’s beliefs against, the attacks of others.

Apostasy: An abandoning or falling away from what was believed in, as a faith, etc. From the Greek *apostasia*, which actually had an even stronger meaning: rebellion against or rejection of God.

Critic: One who finds fault. One who writes judgments.

Fulness: Those eternal laws, doctrines, ordinances, powers and authorities that enable mankind to gain ultimate salvation (e.g., the priesthood and the gift of the Holy Ghost). Somewhat erroneously, Latter-day Saints often use the phrase “fulness of the Gospel” to refer to all truths made available through the restored Church.³

LDS: A prevalent abbreviation applied to members of The Church of Jesus Christ of **Latter-day Saints**.

Mormon Church: No such entity actually exists. Its application to The Church of

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Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is quite common, but critics use this title to avoid acknowledging the faith's allegiance to Jesus Christ.⁴ The only appropriate abbreviation, and that for journalistic and related purposes, is The Church of Jesus Christ. Technically, use of the term "LDS Church" is also incorrect.

Polemics: The art, craft or practice of disputation. From the Greek *polemos*, or war.

Restoration: To give back something taken away or lost. Return to a former or normal state.

Canonized Scriptures: Canon is of Greek origin, originally meaning "a rod for testing straightness." Canonized scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ are called standard works and denote the only authoritative and accepted collection of sacred writings authorized by the LDS faith. True prophets and apostles will continue to receive new revelation, and from time to time the legal authorities of the Church will see fit to formally add to the collection of scripture.

Standard Works: Canonical scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ: (1) Holy Bible (King James version of the Old & New Testaments), (2) Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ, (3) Doctrine and Covenants and (4) Pearl of Great Price.

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SETTING THE STAGE

Fundamental to the LDS faith is the good news that Jesus Christ has restored His Church in our day. A re-establishment was required because the *fulness*, as instituted by Christ and proclaimed by His apostles, was lost to mankind as a direct result of a predicted falling away or *apostasy*.⁵ Scriptural examination of the Old and New Testament focusing on the prediction of just such an event reveals that the apostasy began even during the lifetime of the apostles. This ‘falling away’ accelerated after the deaths of the apostles, culminating in a complete state of apostasy by the middle of the second century. In short, the fullness of Christ’s eternal plan was lost to mankind as a result of the loss of apostolic leadership, social influences, severe persecutions and the adoption of worldly (particularly Hellenistic) philosophies. This condition continued through the middle ages and into the early nineteenth century. The visions and manifestations surrounding the momentous re-establishment of His gospel are accepted by LDS faithful as a divine *restoration* (not a protestant reformation). Again, many ancient prophets and the apostles themselves prophesied of just such a restoration.⁶

The instrumentality used by the Lord to accomplish His work has always been to call a prophet by *revelation*.⁷ Just such a glorious event occurred in the spring of 1820. The narrative of the “First Vision,” in which God the Eternal Father and His Son Jesus Christ appeared to the boy Joseph Smith and called Joseph to be a prophet, unfolds the dawning of this predicted restoration.⁸

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Latter-day Saints note that the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 29) foretold several significant aspects of this predicted restoration.⁹ For example, he prophesied:

Therefore, behold, I will proceed to do a marvellous work and a wonder among this people, even a marvellous work and a wonder: for the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, and the understanding of their prudent men shall be hid.

ISAIAH 29:14

Including numerous revelations subsequent to the “First Vision,” as recorded in the Doctrine and Covenants and the Pearl of Great Price, the following key events occurred in fulfillment of Isaiah’s “marvellous work and a wonder” prophecy:

- God calls a Prophet (Joseph Smith) by direct visitation/revelation. (Spring, 1820)
- Direct angelic training of the Prophet Joseph Smith.
(September 21, 1823 - September 22, 1828)
- Ancient “golden plate” records entrusted to Joseph Smith for translation.
(September 22, 1828)
- Restoration of the Aaronic Priesthood by John the Baptist. (May 15, 1829)
- Restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by Peter, James and John. (June, 1829)
- Publication of the Book of Mormon: Another Testament of Jesus Christ.
(March 26, 1830)
- Re-establishment of The Church of Jesus Christ as a formal entity. (April 6, 1830)
- Calling of the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy. (February/March 1835)
- Restoration of the keys (authority) in the “dispensation of the fullness of times.”¹⁰
(April 3, 1836)

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Today, worldwide Church membership is approaching 12 million and the rate of growth continues to accelerate. In 1984 non-LDS sociologist Rodney Stark, using past patterns of growth as a baseline, projected an LDS population of over 265 million by the year 2080. Using this projection, Stark observed that The Church of Jesus Christ stands on the threshold of becoming the next major world religion.¹¹ LDS faithful see this as a direct fulfillment of Nebuchadnezzar's dream as found in the Old Testament. The prophet Daniel interpreted this dream, noting that the gospel in the latter days would be like a *“stone... cut out of the mountain without hands”* that would become *“a great mountain... that would fill the whole earth.”*¹²

WHY THE CRITICS?

Hot on the heels of this restoration came an immediate and fierce condemnation by the religious leaders of many of the prevalent Christian denominations of the day. This reaction is reminiscent of a similar Old Testament experience shared by the Prophet Jeremiah.¹³ From its earliest beginnings the LDS faith has been routinely attacked and maligned by self-appointed critics (anti-Mormons). The polemical basis for this reaction is that The Church of Jesus Christ:

- proclaims that the heavens are once again open to revelation and that prophets, as in former days, are again in the land to lead, guide and cry repentance.
- announces that it is Christ's true Church, restored to earth by the Savior.

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- announces that the Savior has entrusted The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints with His authority and power of His priesthood, including the right to confer the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that this fullness is not available through any other means.
- accepts all biblical teachings but rejects the extra-biblical elaborations of the councils and creeds and/or products of Greek philosophy which were introduced during or after the apostasy.
- announces that God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Ghost are three separate and distinct beings though completely one in unity, purpose, might, mind, power and glory but not substance.¹⁴

A major reason why critics exhibit so much zeal in attacking The Church of Jesus Christ is that LDS beliefs do not, in their minds, conform to the tenets of so-called “historical Christianity.” Unfortunately, the very individuals who rely on this position often espouse beliefs that are not evident in early Christian writings and cannot be substantiated by biblical reference. In fact, most differences in biblical interpretations between critics and LDS faithful can be traced to Greek philosophical influences that began to assault the Church soon after the Savior’s death. This process culminated in progressively apostate Hellenic influenced “creeds” adopted after the death of the apostles. Notable among these creeds are the Old Roman, Caesarean, Apostolic, Nicene and Athanasian. These creeds were formulated and developed by various factions—not through revelation or prophecy—but by committees, councils, compromises and imperial governmental edicts.

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In the final analysis, critics find various LDS beliefs to be foreign to their particular perspective. The most zealous go so far as to denounce one or another LDS tenet as being blasphemous or worse. In fact recent studies indicate that the LDS mindset, or outlook on life and religious matters, closely resembles that of the biblical Hebrews, and is in stark contrast to the Hellenistic European mindset of many who profess so-called “historical Christianity.” A paper on this subject, originally presented at a symposium sponsored by the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) and subsequently published by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) entitled “What Has Athens To Do With Jerusalem?: Apostasy And Restoration In The Big Picture,” is an excellent and concise statement on this topic.¹⁵ In short, as scholars examine early Christian and Judaic writings it is becoming more and more apparent that LDS tenets and beliefs are firmly rooted in antiquity.

THE STRATEGY

Anti-Mormon critics consistently quote from a whole spectrum of questionable sources, purporting them to be authoritatively equivalent to the standard works of The Church of Jesus Christ.¹⁶ Latter-day Saints are then challenged to explain what the critics serve up as an apparent “issue.” A particular citation, or array of citations, is often presented out of context in order to create an impression of discrepancy, contradiction, error or falsehood. This tactic is used even though

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the crafted conclusion is generally strained and often shown to be blatantly false when the background and context is fully examined and understood.

Those who distort the doctrines and beliefs of the Latter-day Saints in this manner often feel that they are “doing the Lord’s work.” Looking back in time to Christ’s mortal ministry, one finds parallels in the charges and attacks made by the Jewish Pharisees, Sadducees and Scribes.

TRINITY JOURNAL (1998)

Noted evangelical scholars Carl Mosser and Paul Owen state: *“In this battle the Mormons are fighting valiantly. And the evangelicals? It appears that we may be losing the battle and not knowing it.”* Their study goes so far as to note that *“...currently there are (as far as we are aware) no books from an evangelical perspective that responsibly interact with contemporary LDS scholarly and apologetic writings. A survey of twenty recent evangelical books criticizing Mormonism reveals that none interacts with this growing body of literature. Only a handful demonstrate any awareness of pertinent works. Many of the authors promote criticisms that have long been refuted. A number of these books claim to be ‘the definitive’ book on the matter. That they make no attempt to interact with contemporary LDS scholarship is a stain upon the authors’ integrity and causes one to wonder about their credibility.”*¹⁷

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RICHARD J. MOUW (2002)

Richard J. Mouw, President and Professor of Christian Philosophy at Fuller Theological Seminary recently stated, “...as an evangelical I must confess that I am ashamed of our record in relating to the Mormon community.” He further states, “By bearing false witness against our LDS neighbors, we evangelicals have often sinned not just against Mormons but against the God who calls us to be truth-tellers.”¹⁸

A LITTLE PERSPECTIVE!

Critics of the LDS faith have no universally accepted body of belief or reference works that are considered binding or accurate other than their particular (and often subjectively personal) interpretations of the Bible. Latter-day Saints reverence the Holy Bible (KJV) as the Word of God. That Latter-day Saints do not believe that the Bible comes to them complete and perfectly translated (biblical inerrancy) in no way diminishes their love for and reliance on it as the Word of God. Nevertheless, it is a fact that the Bible has always been subject to a massive variety of doctrinal and contextual interpretations. Worldwide there are some 4,200 denominations in existence today,¹⁹ with varying claims that the number of Christian denominations stands somewhere between 1,300 and 1,900. From an LDS perspective this diversity contradicts Paul’s statement to the Ephesians of “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4:5).

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DOUBLE STANDARD?

Experience shows that critics of the LDS faith refuse to allow alternate interpretations of various passages from the Bible, even when non-LDS scholars clearly demonstrate the plausibility of the LDS position. When questioned about statements made by others (even of their own denomination), many critics demonstrate no inclination or ability to consider any interpretation other than their own. As a result, critics often require a standard of absolute rectitude with regard to an alleged LDS issue, while accepting lower standards for similar issues of their own religious tenets.

This elusiveness is quite typical and contrasts with the foundational doctrines and beliefs of The Church of Jesus Christ. LDS faithful do, indeed, have additional canon of scripture and inspired guidance from modern-day prophets and apostles to clearly set forth and correctly interpret Christ's word. Members are counseled to study, seek out, and verify by personal revelation that which is true. A significant body of modern-day revelation and literature is available to help one contemplate and understand various elements of doctrine and truth. Thus, the LDS faith is firmly grounded on definitive standards of belief, subject only to God's prophetic revelatory process.

WHAT IS A PROPHET?

Critics are particularly aroused by the LDS claim to having living prophets and apostles who receive divine revelation and guidance from the Lord Jesus Christ to lead His earthly

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Church today. Many critics allege that the notion of a modern-day prophet is heresy. This belief is popular but not biblical. Indeed, Christ stated that prophets would follow Him. He also confirmed the principle of continuing revelation to apostles and prophets to assist them in guiding His Church.²⁰ He said:

Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city.

MATTHEW 23:34

Further, Christ stated that He would not only send prophets but would also expect His followers to receive them as His messengers:

He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.

MATTHEW 10:40-41²¹

It is most unfortunate in our modern age that there are simply too many biases among most Christians about what a prophet should or should not be. These preconceived notions exclude anyone who might actually walk and talk like other men.²² There are, in fact, members of the LDS faith who have contributed to this fallacy by not allow-

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ing Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, etc. to be mortal men as well as prophets. A study of the lives of Moses, Elisha and Peter—to name just a few—clearly demonstrates that they too were mortal men with imperfections and mortal fallibility.

JOSEPH SMITH (1843)

*This morning, I read German, and visited with a brother and sister from Michigan, who thought that “a prophet is always a prophet;” but I told them that a prophet was a prophet only when he was acting as such.*²³

Latter-day Saints do not accept the notion that the mortal human nature of any man, be he a prophet or any other church leader, is beyond weaknesses, foibles, personal opinions or erroneous assumptions. How the Lord interacts with His prophets and servants, as well as with all His earthly children, is not determined by man and does *not* conform to our ways.²⁴ Prophets can have, and do express, personal opinions on various matters that have not yet been revealed by the Lord. LDS faithful accept this principle and understand that agency is an essential part of the Lord’s plan of salvation. Heavenly direction (revelation) does not often come as a word-for-word edict. In fact, it seldom comes that way.²⁵

TO BE A CRITIC

First, one must understand that it is far easier for a critic to state his case than for someone to respond to the criticism, slander or misrepresentation. This is true, be it anti-Mormon allegations, critics of the theatre or

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some other critic. With a single authoritative quotation or statement, often taken out of context, the critic can raise doubts and give false impressions. In response, a major paper is often required to clearly refute such an attack. Unfortunately, the full range of information, resources and understanding required to answer a particular criticism is not readily available to the average Latter-day Saint. When a respondent cannot give an instant or decisive reply, the critic touts the “fact” that the criticism is obviously valid. As noted earlier, most critics promote issues that have long been discredited and make little or no attempt to be balanced or honest in their portrayal of LDS beliefs.

A second point of anti-Mormon criticism is equally important to understand. Critics consistently make their arguments by using faulty logic. Unfortunately, the untrained thinker can quite easily fall prey to a wide array of such fallacies, which may include:

- **Missing the Point**

Straw Man: attacking an argument different from (and weaker than) the opposition’s best argument.

Begging the Question: the truth of the conclusion is assumed by the premise.

- **Fallacies of Ambiguity**

Equivocation: the same term is used with two different meanings.

- **Fallacies of Distraction**

False Dilemma: two choices are given when in fact there are three or more options.

- **Changing the Subject**

Attacking the Person: the person’s character is attacked as a diversionary tactic.

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- **Causal Fallacies**

Post Hoc: because one thing follows another, it is held to have been caused by the other.

- **Category Errors**

Division: because the whole has a certain property, it is argued that the parts have that property.

- **Non Sequitur**

Affirming the Consequence: any argument of the form: If A then B; B, therefore A.

- **Syllogistic Errors**

Existential Fallacy: a particular conclusion is drawn from a universal premise.

- **Fallacies of Explanation**

Subverted Support: The phenomenon being explained doesn't exist.

- **Fallacies of Definition**

Circular Definition: The definition includes the term being defined as a part of the definition.

- **Appeals to Motives in Place of Support**

Popularity: a proposition is argued to be true because it is widely held to be true.

For an in-depth review of this topic and a significant list of common examples detailing how these types of fallacies are so often applied, the reader is directed to Wade Englund's apologetic Web site under the heading *Critique of the Critics*.²⁶

DOOMED?

From its earliest beginnings critics have been confident that The Church of Jesus Christ is surely bound for self-destruction. After all, it is burdened with an array of perceived false doctrines and misguided faith,

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its missionary force is composed of young men and women with only a minimal amount of formal training, and lay members, with full-time jobs and family responsibilities are called as bishops to provide spiritual leadership for each congregation.²⁷ Thus, the conclusion of most critics is that the LDS faith, with its non-professional clergy and numerous misdirected beliefs will fall apart if only the “truth” can be made known.

To the contrary, the Church has thrived for over a century and a half and the “non-professional” clergy hypothesis simply fails to address the fact that none of Christ’s original twelve apostles was a trained rabbi.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Even before The Church of Jesus Christ was formally organized there were those who felt compelled to attack Joseph Smith and the work he was directed to perform. Today, critics often feel no obligation to confirm the accuracy of the information they espouse, ranging from the seemingly accurate to the totally fallacious. When Robert and Rosemary Brown investigated the critics’ propensity for misstating the truth, they found enough examples of misrepresentation and deceit to fill four volumes of *They Lie in Wait To Deceive*.²⁸

PARLEY P. PRATT (1838)

“Why do the Elders of the Church hold their peace, instead of contradicting the various falsehoods, which are published concerning them and their principles? The answer is, it would require a standing army of writers and printers in

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constant employ; for no sooner are our enemies detected in one falsehood, than a thousand more are put in circulation by them: and there are many who love a lie so much more than the truth, that we are quite willing they should enjoy their strong delusion.”²⁹

While some Latter-day Saints would probably label almost anything containing negative statements about the Church as “anti-Mormon,” it seems appropriate to categorize the various types of publications:

MALICIOUS: Material deliberately intended to vilify Latter-day Saints and their beliefs, even to the extent of employing outright lies, forgeries and the deliberate misreading of documentation.

Examples for Consideration: Ed Decker, Loftes Tryk.

MALIGNING: Very negative material, probably without a malicious origin, that nevertheless contains blatant falsehoods (often gleaned from other sources). The writers tend to be so biased that they simply don’t know and/or don’t care that they are perpetrating falsehoods.

Examples for Consideration: John L. Smith, Michael Reynolds, and Robert McKay.

MISDIRECTED: Material produced by well-intentioned individuals who sincerely believe that the LDS faith is an imposture and that it is their duty to rescue misguided adherents from its evil clutches. While usually not involved in outright lies, these critics typically slant their material to reflect very negatively on the LDS faith, even when

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there is nothing inherently negative in the material being used. Often, they simply misunderstand, or refuse to understand, the LDS argument.

Examples for Consideration: Jerald & Sandra Tanner, James White.

MISINFORMED: Material by researchers (sociologists, historians, etc.) ostensibly intended to be unbiased. Unfortunately, they often include a significant measure of misinformation, most of which is gleaned from non-LDS sources. In such cases, there is usually no deliberate attempt to misrepresent. However, misinformation lapses can and often do mislead the reader. An example would be *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* by Richard and Joan Ostling.³⁰

MISCELLANEOUS: A miscellaneous category seems appropriate to address individuals such as D. Michael Quinn. An avid researcher, Quinn is often correct and his material is generally intended to be a scholarly approach to the issues. But his biases and hidden agenda often taint his writings, leaving him open to what some would see as deliberate misrepresentation, while others might chalk it up to poor scholarship or simple blindness. His interpretation of Joseph Smith's statement about lying in the embrace of one's friends, as being a reference to homosexuality, is just one example. From the context (a funeral discourse) Joseph was clearly referring to being buried near one's friends and family so they would be the first persons one would see on resurrection day.

Interestingly, some long-standing methods of deceit are so blatant as to have appalled

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even Jerald and Sandra Tanner, professional anti-Mormon critics:

“We were thoroughly disgusted when we later found that a number of Mormon critics had also resorted to the idea that ‘the end justifies the means.’ Because they firmly believed that Mormonism was built on sand and therefore dangerous to the people who accepted it, they seemed to feel that they had the right to twist the facts to make their arguments stronger. In some cases documents were actually altered to suit their purposes, and in at least a few cases the forgery of entire documents was perpetrated.”³¹

Having noted the above, one should point out that a specific example of deceit is, in fact, the works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. The Tanners’ major work is *Mormonism—Shadow or Reality?* This book is filled with large bold letters, underlining and continued repetitions that make it a very difficult book to read. The editors at Moody Press succeeded in reworking that information into a much more readable version, *The Changing World of Mormonism*. The Tanners would like you to believe that they are honest truth seekers.

Non-LDS scholar, Lawrence Foster, professor of American History at Georgia Institute of Technology, has spent many years of intensive research on Mormonism and its history. He has noted:

“The Tanners have repeatedly assumed a holier-than-thou stance, refusing to

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be fair in applying the same debate standard of absolute rectitude which they demand of Mormonism to their own actions, writing, and beliefs... The Tanners seem to be playing a skillful shell game in which the premises for judgment are conveniently shifted so that the conclusion is always the same—negative.”³²

D. Michael Quinn also suggested that the Tanners should be able to present a larger perspective.

“Jerald and Sandra Tanner have read widely enough in the sources of LDS history to provide that perspective, but they do not. Although the most conscientious and honest researcher can overlook pertinent sources of information, the repeated omissions of evidence by the Tanners suggest an intentional avoidance of sources that modify or refute their caustic interpretation of Mormon history.”³³

At this juncture, the reader may have noticed that it is quite common for the critics to be divided in their criticisms. On a rather regular basis one can find them attacking each other’s position, methodology, assumptions and often, even their conclusions.

A COMMON EXAMPLE

The following is a common illustration of an anti-Mormon “issue” as noted on critic Robert McKay’s Web site.³⁴ Under the title, *A Closer Look At Brigham Young*, the follow-

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ing quotation was used in an attempt to discredit Joseph Smith's account of the First Vision:

McKay's Quote (*Note McKay's use of "Mormon Church." - Bolding and underlining is also his.*)

"The Mormon church looks back to Joseph Smith's First Vision, where he alleged that God and Jesus appeared to him, as a foundational point. President Joseph Fielding Smith taught that the LDS church rests on Joseph Smith and this vision. Brigham Young's account of this alleged important event was not the official version. In fact, he flatly denied the official story. Young said, in the Journal of Discourses, "The Lord did not come . . . But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith, Jun." (Vol. 2, pg. 171). And Young wasn't saying anything revolutionary..."

Let's take a closer look at this assertion:

- First, McKay's quote (without due credit) comes directly from material published in 1961 by Jerald and Sandra Tanner in their anti-Mormon pamphlet, *Joseph Smith Speaks on the First Vision*.
- Second, in that same year (1961), Hugh Nibley refuted the Tanners' assertion in *Censoring the Joseph Smith Story*.
- Third, Brigham Young's *Journal of Discourses* statement, as edited by the Tanners, resulted in a radically changed meaning.

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The Actual Statement (The text used to produce the above misquote is bolded and underlined.)

*“But as it was in the days of our Savior, so was it in the advent of this new dispensation. It was not in accordance with the notions, traditions, and pre-conceived ideas of the American people... **The Lord did not come** with the armies of heaven, in power and great glory, nor send His messengers panoplied with aught else than the truth of heaven, to communicate to the meek, the lowly, the youth of humble origin, the sincere enquirer after the knowledge of God. **But He did send His angel to this same obscure person, Joseph Smith Jun.,** who afterwards became a Prophet, Seer, and Revelator, and informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects of the day, for they were all wrong.”³⁵*

Unfortunately, McKay and the Tanners are banking on the assumption that lay Christians will accept such quotes as factual and in context simply because they come from “truth seekers” like themselves.

Nibley carefully demonstrates how the true meaning of a text can be drastically altered by the judicious use of ellipsis (...) to suppress selected sentences, words, or phrases. In this particular text which

“explains that as in ancient times the Lord did not come himself nor send his messengers in visible splendor, our

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*critics make the sentences appear to say that he did not come at all. And by further juggling, it is made to appear that the Lord sent an angel instead of coming himself, and that it was the angel who told Joseph Smith that all the religious sects were wrong. Actually the statement “the Lord did not come” is promptly followed by the fuller specification “nor send His messengers,” which our critics have carefully omitted, since that makes it perfectly clear that Brigham Young is denying neither class of heavenly manifestation, but simply stating that they did not happen in a particular way; for in the next sentence he goes on to specify that God “did send his angel to this same obscure person,” and [He, that is] **God**...“informed him that he should not join any of the religious sects.” God both instructed Joseph Smith and sent his angel—but he did not do either in visible splendor.”³⁶*

The context of Brigham Young’s statement clearly specifies that God did not (and does not) make a worldly spectacle of communicating with His prophets. Thus, the Lord did, in fact, appear and did, in fact, send angels as part of Joseph’s heavenly experiences in restoring Christ’s Church to earth. Such textual dishonesty by McKay and the Tanners is most unfortunate. However, one might notice that even this one simple refutation required a significant amount of detailed analysis. It is truly sad that such “issues” continue to appear and reappear even though they have long been clearly discredited, as this example clearly demonstrates.

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SILVER BULLETS

Periodically, critics of The Church of Jesus Christ attempt to make headline-grabbing statements to the effect that they have finally laid bare some sort of Achilles heel proving the Church to be less than it professes to be. Typically, these critics cannot contain their exuberance in claiming that theirs is the ultimate “silver bullet” that will provide a definitive deathblow. Their short-lived euphoria is often accompanied by a mass, unsolicited distribution of their findings to Latter-day Saints in an attempt to prove their false claims against The Church of Jesus Christ.³⁷

With the passing of time these hoped for bullets have, one by one, proven to be duds. With continuing advancements in gospel discernment, coupled with advances in LDS scholarship and prophetic insight, the very basis for such claims have most often proven to not only exonerate the Church, but to actually strengthen the restoration claims it professes.

Recently, critics have touted a specific type of DNA analysis (mitochondrial or mtDNA) applied to a limited number of Native Americans as the latest silver bullet. In short, the assumption of these detractors is that Native Americans are of Asiatic (non-Hebrew) origin; therefore, the Book of Mormon is a deception. A basic premise needed to reach this forced conclusion holds that the Book of Mormon asserts that all Native Americans are of strict Hebrew ancestry. The fact is that the Book of Mormon makes no such assertion.

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Any such rush to judgment fails to take into account at least four significant considerations. First, the current scientific status of DNA and mtDNA research is in its infancy and the known issues in attempting to trace ancient lineages to modern DNA conclusions are growing in complexity.³⁸ Second, what DNA traits did the Jaredite, Lehite and Mulekite colonies bring with them? Third, what was the size and scope of indigenous populations in the Americas upon the arrival of the above noted colonies? Fourth, what commingling between the indigenous populations and the colony migrations ultimately took place and what were the genetic stream results? In this regard, one is reminded of the age-old adage that if something sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

JOSEPH FIELDING SMITH (1961)

“Every member of the Church ought to know that it [the Book of Mormon] is true, and we ought to be prepared with an answer to all of those critics who condemn it.”³⁹

For LDS apologetic insight on current DNA discussions, examine on-going issues of FARMS Reviews, Journal of Book of Mormon Studies and the following:

Lindsay, Jeff, “Does DNA evidence refute the Book of Mormon?” LDS Religion & Philosophy. jefflindsay.com/LDSFAQ/DNA.shtml

Barney, Kevin L., “A Brief Review of Murphy and Southerton’s Galileo Event.” FAIR
fairlds.org/apol/bom/bom08.html

Gardner, Brant, “The Tempest in a Teapot, DNA Studies and the Book of Mormon” FAIR
fairlds.org/apol/bom/bom07.html

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Woodward, Scott, “DNA and the Book of Mormon” FAIR. fairlds.org/pubs/woodward01/

Wyatt, Allen, “Motivation, Behavior and Dissension,” FAIR.

fairlds.org/apol/antis/200207.html

A RARE EXCEPTION

A landmark publication by respected evangelical InterVarsity Press in 1997 entitled *How Wide The Divide: A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* stands as a rare exception. Authored by Craig L. Blomberg (evangelical) and Stephen E. Robinson (LDS), this volume is a frank dialogue conducted within a framework of mutual respect, civility and integrity. The authors listen to each other and seek out the authentic agreements and disagreements that exist between them. In the conversation that develops, the reader is able to examine what each of these two individuals believes about key theological issues. Truly a breath of fresh air, this is highly recommended reading and is readily available through most bookstores, though it has been banned from a number of evangelical locations.

How Wide The Divide was followed by a series of intense book reviews published in 1999 by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) at Brigham Young University. The 340 page special issue of FARMS Review of Books (Volume 11, Number 2) features an extensive, critical review by evangelicals Paul Owen and Carl Mosser followed by equally extensive reviews by a host of LDS scholars.

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In the introduction, editor Daniel C. Peterson notes the following:

“After many years of lamenting the low (indeed, often abysmal) quality of most critical writing against the church and its teachings, it seemed appropriate for the Review to call attention to (and even, in a way, to celebrate) a critical analysis that proceeds in the way such critical analyses should—that is, charitably, without name-calling, straw-man caricaturizing, accusations of bad faith, and distortion. And we are honoring Owen and Mosser’s seriousness in the best way that we know—that is, by responding in kind, seriously, honestly, respectfully, and as rigorously as we can. Honest concern for truth (as distinguished from propaganda and posturing) deserves no less.”⁴⁰

FAITH IS REQUIRED

Faith! There may be some who might question why a loving Father doesn’t answer our questions in a more straightforward and direct manner. In wondering, one often overlooks an essential ingredient in the plan of salvation—that we need to learn to choose for ourselves what is right. If that choice is too simple, then we haven’t actually chosen—we have simply picked the obvious. Hugh B. Brown once said, “Man cannot live without faith, because in life’s adventure the central problem is character-building, which is not a product of logic, but of faith in ideals and sacrificial devotion to them.”⁴¹

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EZRA TAFT BENSON (1988)

“Our main task is to declare the gospel and do it effectively. We are not obligated to answer every objection. Every man eventually is backed up to the wall of faith, and there he must make his stand”⁴²

My personal belief is that the Lord does and always has kept His word to us in a delicate balance. When the forces of opposition start getting too strong, He will reveal additional knowledge that will build faith. If a testimony can be built only on logic, then He will allow the adversary to add some additional information to encourage study, soul searching, prayer and faith. Many of the critics have a desire to present attacks against The Church of Jesus Christ that will be stronger than the testimonies of those to whom they are presenting them. Let us realize that the critics will always be there, and that we will need to be balanced in our understanding of gospel principles. Criticisms can actually build faith when they are correctly understood. We can either build our faith or create doubt, depending on the perspective with which we analyze the data presented.⁴³

When all is said and done, the words of Moroni, a Book of Mormon prophet, provide us with the ultimate framework established by the Lord on how to know of the truthfulness of any matter laid before us. This includes the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon and the truthfulness of the Lord’s Church, even The Church of Jesus Christ.

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Behold, I would exhort you that when ye shall read these things, if it be wisdom in God that ye should read them, that ye would remember how merciful the Lord hath been unto the children of men, from the creation of Adam even down unto the time that ye shall receive these things, and ponder it in your hearts.

And when ye shall receive these things, I would exhort you that ye would ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of Christ, if these things are not true; and if ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, he will manifest the truth of it unto you, by the power of the Holy Ghost.

And by the power of the Holy Ghost ye may know the truth of all things.

And whatsoever thing is good is just and true; wherefore, nothing that is good denieth the Christ, but acknowledgeth that he is.

And ye may know that he is, by the power of the Holy Ghost; wherefore I would exhort you that ye deny not the power of God; for he worketh by power, according to the faith of the children of men, the same today and tomorrow, and forever. MORONI 10:3-7

This is a promise from the Lord to those with a “sincere heart and real intent.” He will fulfill this promise and testify to those who sincerely investigate the claims of The Church of Jesus Christ. As a student of polemic criticisms of The Church of Jesus Christ for

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over thirty years, I state unequivocally that I have put Moroni's challenge to the test and stand as a witness, and as a disciple, of the Lord Jesus Christ!

EZRA TAFT BENSON (1988)

"We do not have to prove the Book of Mormon is true. The book is its own proof. All we need to do is read it and declare it. The Book of Mormon is not on trial—the people of the world, including the members of the Church, are on trial as to what they will do with this second witness for Christ."⁴⁴

CONCLUSION

It is recognized that many critics making it their commission to assault the LDS faith do so under a misguided notion that they are presenting "truth." Still, it must be pointed out that there is a vocal minority of zealots whose contempt for The Church of Jesus Christ leaves little room in their hearts for any degree of charity. These individuals feel no obligation to present honest scholarly facts. In their sphere, outrageous misrepresentations and blatant falsehoods are deliberately used to achieve their objective—at any cost. Their literature, films and public presentations are designed to seduce those who simply have no idea that they are being deceived. Unfortunately, their falsehoods are often picked up and repeated by authors who do not intend to mislead their readers, but are simply misled themselves.

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It is this author's objective to point truth seekers in a direction that will allow them to discern the basic issues and facts involved. Furthermore, it is the intent of this guide to provide initial access to the voluminous LDS apologetic resources that are available and increasing in number on a regular basis.

1 TIMOTHY 4:1-2

NOW the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron;

ISAIAH 5:20

Woe unto them that call evil good, and good evil; that put darkness for light and light for darkness; that put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.

II CHRONICLES 20:20

...Believe in the Lord your God, so shall ye be established; believe his prophets, so shall ye prosper.

INTERNET RESOURCES ([http://www.](http://www.lds.org))

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
(*Official Church Internet site*) lds.org
Church News desnews.com/cn
The Foundation for Ancient Research and
Mormon Studies (**FARMS**) farms.byu.edu

Included below is a sampling of sites on LDS apologetics. From the references listed the viewer can access any number of addi-

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tional pro-LDS sites. None of these locations is, or purports to be, an official site of The Church of Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, a tremendous amount of apologetic work and valuable insight is available. Much of the material is well documented, and some of it is quite scholarly. However, as might be expected, it runs the gamut from sound doctrine to personal conjecture and opinion.

SHIELDS shields-research.org
FAIR fairlds.org

All About Mormons (**Walsh**) allaboutmormons.info
Apologetics (**Englund**)

aros.net/~wenglund/Anti.htm

Apologetics (**Schindler**) [members.shaw.ca/
mschindler/ MarcSchindlerApologetics.htm](http://members.shaw.ca/mschindler/MarcSchindlerApologetics.htm)

CRG (**Chapman**) 2s2.com/chapmanresearch

Early Christianity and Mormonism (**Bickmore**)
geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/2671/EC.html

LDS Religion (**Lindsay**)
jefflindsay.com/MyPages.shtml#religion

Mormon Fortress (**Ash**) mormonfortress.com

Mormonism (**Watson**)
[fortunecity.com/meltingpot/ bicycleroad/21/](http://fortunecity.com/meltingpot/bicycleroad/21/)

Mormonism Researched (**Shirts**)
www2.ida.net/graphics/shirtail/mormonis.htm

Resource for LDS Apologetics (**Graham**)
antimormonismrevealed.com

Response to Critics (**Anderson**)
lightplanet.com/response/index.shtml

A short note: Readers will soon discover that anti-Mormon URL locations seldom supply linkages that allow the viewer to access pro-LDS apologetic sites! It would be refreshing to see the “anti’s” provide linkages to the above sites so that honest truth seekers could pursue a balanced investigation.

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SUGGESTED REFERENCES

In addition to the above the reader is referred to the semi-annual *FARMS Review* (formerly known as *FARMS Review of Books*)⁴⁵ and the semi-annual *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*,⁴⁶ also published by FARMS, for an on-going analysis of research efforts that continually address the so-called issues under consideration. In addition, the author has included a partial list of relevant reference books and articles as a sampling of the many publications that address the issues and concerns of critics of The Church of Jesus Christ. From a diligent study of this sampling the honest truth seekers can obtain an expanded level of understanding and can access a very comprehensive array of works.

BOOKS, ARTICLES, TAPES

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NOTES

1. For a full review of the reference cited, see Acts 28:17-29. Further, it is a well-attested historical fact that the earliest Christians were systematically accused of every conceivable “evil,” ranging from atheism, heresy and blasphemy, to the shocking charge of eating their own babies. It would be well to review Isaiah 5:20-24, the whole of Isaiah chapter 53, and Revelation 12:10 within this context. For examples of pejorative labeling directed at the Savior during His ministry see Matthew 9:2-3; 11:19; 26:59-61; 26:64-65; Mark 2:5-7; Luke 5:20-21; 7:34; John 10:22-42; 19:7. For examples of such labeling of Christ’s apostles in the New Testament, see Acts 6:11; 13:45; 24:5.
2. Junius F. Wells, *The Contributor* 13/1 (November 1891): 52. The author expresses appreciation to our friends at SHIELDS for discovering this most insightful quotation in a forerunner to current Church magazines.
3. Although Latter-day Saints frequently use the term “fulness of the gospel” to refer generally to all truths to be learned through the restored Church, this is not the real meaning of the term “gospel”. The gospel is the good news of Christ’s atonement, and its first principles are faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. This is the definition given in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 10:14; 15:13-14; 3 Nephi 27:13-21; Ether 4:18), the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 3:20; 13:1; 20:9; 27:5; 33:11-12; 39:5-6; 42:12; 76:40-42; 84:26-27; 107:20; 135:3; 138:2-4, 57), and the Pearl of Great Price (JS-H 1:34; Articles of Faith 3-4). D&C 93:51 uses the term “the gospel of salvation,” while Abraham 2:11 speaks of “the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation, even of life eternal” (cf. D&C 128:5, 17). In Jacob 7:6, the gospel is defined as “the doctrine of Christ,” referring to the doctrine concerning Christ, rather than the totality of Christ’s teachings, since he had not yet been born when these words were uttered (cf. Mormon 3:21; D&C

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76:82). Elsewhere, the Book of Mormon equates the “fulness of the gospel” with coming “to the knowledge of the true Messiah” (1 Nephi 10:14; 15:13-14; cf. 3 Nephi 20:30-31; D&C 19:27). The Book of Mormon contains the most lucid explanation of the atonement of Christ (see especially 2 Nephi Chapters 2 and 9; Mosiah Chapter 15; Alma Chapters 34 and 42) and therefore clearly qualifies as containing the fulness of the gospel. It must be noted that it was the Protestants who first used the term “gospel” to mean the totality of religious truth, by which they mean the contents of the Holy Bible. Latter-day Saints accept this meaning when adapted to accommodate modern revelation and other ancient scriptures that have come to light. Still, it is not the definition of “gospel” in the Book of Mormon or other scriptures. An attempted criticism of the Book of Mormon is that it does not contain the “required LDS fulness of the gospel” because it doesn’t discuss baptism for the dead, eternal marriage, etc. This criticism is a straw man fallacy because the scriptures themselves do not use the term “gospel” in such a sense. (Thanks to John Tvedtnes for his insight.)

4. As a practical fact, the nomenclature “Mormon Church” is most often used by those not of the LDS faith simply because its usage is commonplace, and not as a criticism. It is also true that many members of The Church of Jesus Christ are also in the habit of using this terminology. It does need to be pointed out that this practice is erroneous and can be quite misleading, especially in light of 2 Nephi 27:7-9. Further, it can and often does contribute to misinformation and misunderstanding.
5. **APOSTASY** - The following biblical references will assist the reader in understanding that a universal “falling-away” or apostasy would occur subsequent to the Lord’s earthly ministry. (Primary citations are noted in bold.) **Isaiah 29:9-18; 60:1-3; Jeremiah 16:13-21; 23:10-12; Daniel 7:25; 8:10-12; Hosea 3:4-5; 4:1-9; Amos 8:11-12; Micah 3:5-11; Matthew 24:4-13, 23-24; Mark 13:5-6; John 16:1-4; Acts 20:28-30; Romans 1:21-25; Galatians 1:6-9; 3:1; 2 Thess. 2:1-3 (12); 1 Timothy 1:6-7, 19; 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:18; 3:1-9; 4:3-4; Titus 1:10-16; Hebrews 10:26-30; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 2:20-22; 1 John 2:18-19; 4:1-3; 2 John 1:7-10; Jude 1:3-4; Revelation 2:2-5; 3:14-16; 13:4-8; 17:1-2; 18:2-3, 8-9, 15-24; 19:2.**

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6. **RESTORATION** - The following biblical references, when studied together and in context, describe that a restoration of the Lord's Church would occur in our time. (Primary citations are noted in bold.) Deuteronomy 30:1-5; **Isaiah 2:2-3**; 11:11-12; 29:11-14; Ezekiel 11:17-20; Amos 3:7; Malachi 4:5-6; **Matthew 24:14, 31**; **Acts 3:19-24**; 13:40-41; **Ephesians 1:10**. In addition, the following passages of scripture give additional insight. Psalms 14:7; 107:1-7; Isaiah 1:26-27; 28:16; Jeremiah 3:14-15; 31:31-33; Ezekiel 20:33-37; 37:15-28 (26); Daniel 2:36-45; Joel 2:28; Malachi 3:1-3; Matthew 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-1; 13:34-37; Acts 1:6-7; Romans 11:25-28; Revelation 14:6-7.
7. **REVELATION** - The English word revelation is translated from the Greek word apokalypsis (apocalypse), meaning to make known or uncover. The following biblical references, when studied together and in context, note the process by which the Lord reveals His directives to the world through prophets. (Primary citations are noted in bold.) **Amos 3:7**; **2 Peter 1:20-21**; Numbers 12:6; Matthew 16:13-19; Luke 1:70; Acts 3:19-26; 23:34; 1 Cor. 12:27-28; Gal. 1:11-19; Eph. 2:18-20; 3:3-5; 4:11-12; 1 Peter 5:1. The following additional references demonstrate that revelation is an essential part of the Lord's gospel plan: Gen. 41:39; Num. 11:29; Deut. 8:3; 1 Sam. 3:1; 1 Kings 19:12; Job 33:14-16; Prov. 29:18; Ezek. 37:16-28; Dan. 2:45; Matthew 7:7-8; 11:25-27 (Luke 10:22); 21:42-43; 24:14, 31, 33-35; Mark 13:27-37; John 10:4; 14:21; 15:15; 16:13; 17:5-8; Acts 2:37-40; 1 Cor. 2:9-16; 14:26-33; 1 Eph. 1:15-17; 2 Thess. 2:1-8; 1 Peter 1:20-21; 3:2-3; Revelation 1:1. In the Lord's Church prophets are seers and revelators to the Church and to the world. In addition, when properly understood, every individual may receive personal revelation for his/her personal benefit. However, it is contrary to the law of God for any person to receive revelation for those higher in authority, (See Revelation, LDS Bible Dictionary, p. 762, for this and additional information.)
8. For a detailed account of the "First Vision" experience see the Pearl of Great Price, Joseph Smith History.
9. For a variant reading see Robert A. Cloward "Isaiah 29 and the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch, ed. (Provo: FARMS, 1998): 191-247.

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10. See Ephesians 1:10 for a description of this predicted event. The restoration of additional priesthood keys (authority to carry out Christ's design and directives) occurred during the visitation by Jesus Christ, Moses, Elias and Elijah in the Kirtland Temple (April 3, 1836) to Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery (D&C 110).
11. Rodney Stark, "The Rise of a New World Faith," *Review of Religious Research* 26 (September 1984): 18-19.
12. For a full account of Nebuchadnezzar's dream and Daniel's prophetic interpretation of that dream see Daniel 2:28-45.
13. See Jeremiah 26:1-15. The response of the Jewish religious leaders to the earthly ministry of the Savior is, of course, the most significant example of a reaction to truth restored.
14. Latter-day Saints perceive the Father and the Son in the most literal, anthropomorphic of terms. "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit." (Doctrine and Covenants 130:22). "Strictly speaking anthropomorphism is the conception that God has human attributes and characteristics; hence, people who profess to worship a personal God are sometimes said to believe in an anthropomorphic God. Actually, of course, man was created in God's image, not God in man's. But since man is the inheritor of the physical form and, to some extent, the attributes and characteristics of Deity, it follows that Deity has the same form and the fulness of the attributes enjoyed by men, and so in a rather inaccurate sense it may be agreed that the true God is an anthropomorphic Being." Bruce R. McConkie, *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City, Utah: Bookcraft, 1966): 39. —To expand on this understanding, Latter-day Saints "...do not view the language of Genesis as allegorical; human beings are created in the form and image of a God who has a physical form and image (Gen. 1:26). Thus, "God is a Spirit" (John 4:24) in the sense that the Holy Ghost, the member of the Godhead who deals most often and most directly with humans, is a God and a spirit, but God the Father and God the Son are spirits with physical, resurrected bodies. Latter-day

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Saints deny the abstract nature of God the Father and affirm that he is a concrete being, that he possesses a physical body, and that he is in space and time. They further reject any idea that God the Father is “totally other,” unknowable, or incomprehensible. In LDS doctrine, knowing the Father and the Son is a prerequisite to eternal life (John 17:3; D&C 88:49). In the opinion of many Latter-day Saints, the concept of an abstract, incomprehensible deity constitutes an intrusion of Greek philosophical categories upon the biblical record.” William O. Nelson, “Anti-Mormon Publications,” *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, 1992): 48.

15. Daniel C. Peterson, “‘What Has Athens To Do With Jerusalem?’: Apostasy And Restoration In The Big Picture,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): xi-xiii.
16. Latter-day Saints must always require that critics demonstrate LDS tenets and teachings from that which is official, meaning the standard works and official declarations from the First Presidency and the Twelve and nothing more.
17. Carl Mosser & Paul Owen, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?” *Trinity Journal* 19NS (1998): 179-205 at 179-80, 181. It should be noted that this article is not an equivocation; rather it is a call to arms, albeit to a higher “scholarly” level.
18. *Richard J. Mouw, forward to The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owens (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 11. Let there be no misunderstanding, *Challenge* meets the “playfully serious” anti-Mormon criteria set forth by Hugh Nibley back in 1963 in his essay “How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book: A Handbook for Beginners” (reference listing). It is most unfortunate that *Challenge* falls far short of the noble objectives that Mosser and Owens called for in 1998. Louis Midgley aptly describes this publication as follows: “For a genuinely respectful conversation to take place, there must be an informal and entirely voluntary recognition of the claims of the other one [side]... Instead, *The New Mormon Challenge* is merely the latest attack on Latter-day Saint beliefs. It differs from the older literature in that it

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is less acerbic and much better informed and more polite, courteous, and civil. It is still, however, anti-Mormon to the core.” Louis Midgley, “Faulty Topography,” *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1&2 (2002): 145. —As one case in point, LDS scholars strongly suggested before publication that the editors of *Challenge* direct their readers to our century old titles, *Jesus The Christ* and *The Articles of Faith*, both by the late Apostle James E. Talmage (reference listings), as their source for basic Latter-day Saint beliefs and tenets. Instead, they referenced a highly flawed evangelical publication by Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling entitled *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*. It seems only logical that a fundamental scholarly requirement must be to ask the Latter-day Saints what they believe, instead of attempting to impose what critics and non-LDS writers say the Latter-day Saints believe. For extensive reviews of *The New Mormon Challenge* and *Mormon America*, see *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1&2 (2002) and *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003) with additional reviews to follow.

19. Found at <http://www.adherents.com> on September 1, 2003.
20. See Luke 11:49; Ephesians 2:20; Revelation 19:10.
21. See also John 13:20; 15:20.
22. For a concise statement on what a true prophet is and is not, the reader is referred to the section on prophets in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1164-1170. For a more comprehensive discussion of this topic see Hugh Nibley, *The World and the Prophets*, (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book & FARMS, 1987), 333.
23. Joseph Smith, February 8, 1843 *History of the Church*, 5/265.
24. See Isaiah 55:8.
25. See 1 Kings 19:11-12.
26. Wade Englund, “Apologetics,” found at <http://www.aros.net/~wenglund/Anti.htm> on September 1, 2003.
27. All local Church of Jesus Christ positions are staffed by a lay-membership, without financial remuneration.
28. The title for this soon-to-be five-volume series is taken from Ephesians 4:14.

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29. Parley P. Pratt, *Mormonism Unveiled; Zion's Watchman Unmasked* (Joseph W. Harrison, Printer, 1838), 1.
30. Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999, xxvi + 454 pp. For initial reviews outlining a number of the short comings of this volume see Raymond Takashi Swenson, "Faith Without Caricature?," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 65-77 and Louis Midgley, "Faulty Topography," *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1&2 (2002): 139-92.
31. Jerald & Sandra Tanner, *Covering up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*, (Salt Lake City: Utah Lighthouse Ministry, 1990), 1.
32. Lawrence Foster, "Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner," *Dialogue* 17/2 (1984): 35-60 at 45-6 and 49.
33. *Ibid*, 51.
34. Robert McKay, *A Closer Look at Brigham Young*, <http://home.sprynet.com/sprynet/larrying/umi7.htm> (post removed).
35. *Journal of Discourses*, 26 vols. (Liverpool, 1854-1886), 2/171.
36. Hugh Nibley, "Censoring the Joseph Smith Story (1961)," in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book & FARMS, 1991), 89-90.
37. It has been purported that some 30-35,000 copies of Charles M. Larson's *By His Own Hand Upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Grand Rapids: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 240 pp., were distributed in this manner shortly after its publication in 1992 at a cost of nearly \$200,000. For a review of this highly flawed publication see John Gee, "A Tragedy of Errors," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 93-119. —Recently, according to Pastor Joel Kramer (Living Hope Christian Fellowship) 7,500 copies of the video *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* were mailed "to every household" in three Utah towns. In an article dated August 7, 2003 the Salt Lake Tribune reported that Kramer claimed that his congregation had spent \$50,000 from church reserves and donations on the video project.

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38. The following samples, by non-LDS scholars, provide insight indicating that current DNA understanding cannot provide conclusive proof as to whether a person belongs to a specific ethnic origin. —Helgason, Agnar, Birgir Hrafnkelsson, Jeffrey R. Gulcher, Ryk Ward and Kari Stefansson, “A Populationwide Coalescent Analysis of Icelandic Matrilineal and Patrilineal Genealogies: Evidence for a Faster Evolutionary Rate of mtDNA Lineages than Y Chromosomes”, *American Journal of Human Genetics* 72/6 (2003): 1370-88. —Brent Lee Shelton and Jonathan Marks, “Genetic Markers Not a Valid Test of Native Identity”, Council for Responsible Genetics (Cambridge, 2002) found at <http://www.gene-watch.org/genewatch/articles/14-5nativeidentity.html> found on September 1, 2003.
39. Joseph Fielding Smith, “The Book of Mormon, A Divine Record,” *Improvement Era*, December 1961, p. 925.
40. Daniel C. Peterson, “The *Review* Crosses a Divide of Its Own,” *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): vii-viii.
41. Hugh B. Brown, *General Conference Reports*, October 1969, p.105.
42. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 206.
43. Appreciation to Russell Anderson <http://www.lightplanet.com/response/index.shtml> for allowing the author to paraphrase his insights.
44. Ezra Taft Benson, *A Witness and a Warning* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 13
45. *FARMS Review* annually through Volume 15 (2003). The continuation of a journal that has carried various titles (27 issues).
46. Under the FARMS imprint, *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* through Volume 12 (2003), 22 issues.

Back Cover:

Austin Farrer, “The Christian Apologist,” in *Light on C.S. Lewis*, edited by Jocelyn Gibb (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1965), 26.

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Though argument does not create conviction, lack of it destroys belief. What seems to be proved may not be embraced; but what no one shows the ability to defend is quickly abandoned. Rational argument does not create belief, but it maintains a climate in which belief may flourish.”

— Austin Farrer

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