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Title Orders of Submission

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ORDERS OF SUBMISSION¹

Louis Midgley

We must no longer be children, tossed to and fro and blown about by every wind of doctrine, by people's trickery, by their craftiness in deceitful scheming. But speaking truth in love, we must grow up into him who is the head, into Christ.

Ephesians 4:14–5 (NRSV)

Mormon missionaries don't evangelize, they proselytize.

Carl Mosser²

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)—currently the single largest Protestant denomination in the United States—holds the dubious distinction of being, among all sizeable factions, the most directly involved in consuming, as well as producing and marketing,

1. See Eric Voegelin, "The Mongol Orders of Submission to the European Powers, 1245–1255," *Byzantion* 15 (1940–41): 378–413. I have borrowed the title of my essay from something I read well over forty years ago.

2. Carl Mosser, "And the Saints Go Marching On: The New Mormon Challenge for World Missions, Apologetics, and Theology," in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 68.

Review of essays on Mormonism. *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 9/2 (Summer 2005): 1–81.

countercult propaganda, including anti-Mormon materials. Since the SBC is essentially an alliance of at least potentially independent congregations, the actual consumption of such propaganda depends somewhat on the disposition of individual pastors. It is, therefore, difficult to gauge the propensity of congregations to yield to a parade of perverted passions. It is much easier to assess whether there are signs that the increasingly centralized SBC bureaucracy is making an effort to restrain, rather than to promote, the consumption of countercult anti-Mormonism by its affiliated congregations.

The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, which claims to be the flagship seminary of the SBC, publishes the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* (*SBJT*) quarterly. This journal appears to be the primary “scholarly” platform for opinions consonant with current SBC ideology. The summer 2005 issue of the *SBJT* was devoted to Mormonism.³ I will compare and contrast the essays in this issue of the *SBJT* with the host of materials prepared and marketed by the SBC in 1998 on the faith of Latter-day Saints.

The SBC holds annual meetings in different cities. These gatherings of representatives (called “messengers”) of Baptist congregations affiliated with the SBC are regularly accompanied by evangelizing efforts. From 9 through 11 June 1998 the SBC gathered in Salt Lake City for its annual meeting. SBC officials put together plans for what they called Crossover Salt Lake,⁴ which was intended to include, among other things, much door-to-door “soul harvesting” and “church planting.” Latter-day Saints were clearly the targets for these “witnessing” efforts. The materials prepared by SBC officials for that meeting, as I will demonstrate, were borrowed from or produced by those in the

3. This issue includes an editor’s introduction, four essays, and responses to specific questions by five other authors. There are an additional thirteen brief book reviews that, except for the review of Robert Millet’s *A Different Jesus? The Christ of the Latter-day Saints* (pp. 95–96), do not address Mormonism (pp. 82–97). The entire issue is currently available at no cost at www.sbts.edu/Resources/Publications/Journal/Summer_2005.aspx (accessed 9 October 2006).

4. The plans and supporting materials were fashioned by the Interfaith Witness Division of the North American Mission Board (NAMB). Until 1997 the NAMB was known as the Home Mission Board (HMB) to distinguish it from the International Mission Board (IMB).

countercult movement and thus were stridently anti-Mormon.⁵ I wish to determine, if possible, any signs that the anti-Mormon proclivities of SBC officials (and those they consider their ideological allies) have moderated since their 1998 meeting in Salt Lake City. But before setting out a comparison of what was included in 2005 in the *SBJT* and what was distributed in 1998, I will demonstrate that there are good reasons for seeing the views set out in the summer 2005 issue of the *SBJT* as representative of the current official stance of the SBC.

Stephen J. Wellum, the editor of the *SBJT*, provided the introduction to the summer 2005 issue of the journal.⁶ Wellum works under the direction of Russell D. Moore, the journal's executive editor.⁷ Moore responded to a question in a section entitled "The *SBJT* Forum: Speaking the Truth in Love" (see p. 70), which I will examine in detail later, in which he strives to describe how evangelicals can best "engage Latter-day Saints with historic Christianity" (see pp. 70–72). The editor in chief of the *SBJT* is R. Albert Mohler Jr., the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He is described in the biographical note on his Web page "as a leader among American evangelicals" and as "the reigning intellectual of the evangelical movement in the U.S." In addition, the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary is portrayed as the "flagship school of the Southern Baptist Convention and one of the largest seminaries in the world."⁸ It seems unlikely that the views found in a publication over which Mohler has ultimate control would deviate appreciably from the official position of the SBC. It thus appears reasonable to ask if this issue of the *SBJT* represents a

5. For details, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Shall They Not Both Fall into the Ditch? What Certain Baptists Think They Know about the Restored Gospel," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998): 12–96.

6. Stephen J. Wellum's remarks are entitled "Editorial: Evangelicalism, Mormonism, and the Gospel" (pp. 2–3).

7. Russell D. Moore is listed as dean of the School of Theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, where he is also senior vice president for Academic Administration and a professor of theology. In addition, Moore is the executive director of the Carl F. H. Henry Institute for Evangelical Engagement (see p. 70 of the *SBJT* under review for details). Henry was editor of *Christianity Today* for many years.

8. Both passages are quoted from www.albertmohler.com/bio.php (accessed 31 August 2006). The faculty and enrollment figures for Southern Baptist seminaries make this remark look a bit padded.

lessening of hostility among officials of the SBC toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In order to make such an assessment, it is necessary to examine the stance taken by SBC officials in 1998 toward the faith of the Saints. We also need to understand what has impelled some Baptists to adopt such a viewpoint.

Nine-Eleven in Salt Lake City

Jan Shipps, a liberal Methodist who has made a minor career out of assisting journalists anxious for copy when a “Mormon” issue seems to be newsworthy,⁹ has provided a useful description of the 1998 SBC venture into Utah. I will borrow from her account of Crossover Salt Lake in an effort to allay suspicion that I might have embellished or exaggerated either what was planned or what actually happened before and during the SBC meeting in Salt Lake. Reporting soon after that 9–11 June meeting, Shipps indicated that,

judging by the half-dozen reporters who called [me] for information before leaving to cover the SBC in Salt Lake City, neither Mormon-Baptist common ground nor Mormon growth was the main object of interest. What they wanted from me was a prediction about what might happen when these formidable religious behemoths faced off against each other in the very shadow of the Mormon temple.¹⁰

Shipps pictures a tense setting. Southern Baptists in large numbers were about to confront Mormons in Salt Lake City—a terrible titan about to tangle with an awful adversary on its home turf. She neglected to indicate what she told those journalists who asked for her predictions. Instead, she pointed out that

9. For a collection of her observations on Mormon topics, see Jan Shipps, *Sojourner in the Promised Land: Forty Years among the Mormons* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

10. Jan Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake,” *Religion in the News* 1/2 (1998): no pagination. *Religion in the News* is published online by the Leonard E. Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut. See www.trincoll.edu/depts/csrpl/RIN%20Vol.1No.2/salt_lake.htm (accessed 1 September 2006).

every reporter headed to Utah to cover the story seems to have been aware that the Baptists would be spending up to \$600,000 on local evangelism before and during the convention. They knew that, in the weeks leading up to the conclave, radio and TV spots, huge billboard displays, and direct mailings to 400,000 Utah residents had been preparing the ground for the Baptists to launch a pre-convention mission blitz the weekend before the convention opened.¹¹

What Shipps described as “the main event”—an “evangelical onslaught” or “mission blitz”—was Crossover Salt Lake. This evangelizing effort would, among other things, include “an all-out Sunday offensive in which Baptist missionaries planned to proclaim their message of salvation as they knocked on (presumably Mormon) doors all along the Wasatch front.”¹² Shipps indicated that the “press packet prepared by Baptist Press—the SBC news bureau”—made it clear “that Southern Baptists regard Mormonism as a form of counterfeit Christianity.”¹³

The expression “counterfeit Christianity” might have been suggested to Shipps by a book fashioned for the SBC meeting in Salt Lake entitled *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*,¹⁴ which is a collection of anti-Mormon essays written by Norman Geisler, Francis J. Beckwith, Ron Rhodes, R. Philip (Phil) Roberts, and Sandra (and Jerald) Tanner.¹⁵ This book was marketed by the SBC, along with other anti-Mormon

11. Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

12. Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

13. Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

14. See *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism: The Great Divide between Mormonism and Christianity* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 1998). This collection of essays has some quirks. For example, the first chapter appears to have been substantially plagiarized by Norman Geisler from an earlier work by Sandra and Jerald Tanner. For the grisly but amusing details, see Danel W. Bachman, “The Other Side of the Coin: A Source Review of Norman Geisler’s Chapter [in *The Counterfeit Gospel* . . .],” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 175–213. Six other essays in the same issue of the *Review* (see pp. 137–353) respond to each chapter in *The Counterfeit Gospel*.

15. The Tanners, who are not Baptists, have for many years operated a mom-and-pop anti-Mormon bookstore in Salt Lake City under the title Utah Lighthouse Ministry. They have published an anti-Mormon newsletter entitled the *Salt Lake Messenger*. Jerald Tanner passed away 1 October 2006.

materials prepared by the Interfaith Witness division of the North American Mission Board (NAMB), to those messengers attending the annual meeting in Salt Lake. The content of the SBC materials was clearly not designed to appeal to Latter-day Saints; it was Baptists who seem to have constituted the target audience. The tone of much of what they prepared for Crossover Salt Lake was, from a Latter-day Saint perspective, somewhere between insulting and vicious. What seems certain is that SBC officials very much wanted Baptists to believe that the faith of the Saints is “a form of counterfeit Christianity.”¹⁶

Shippo noted that prior to the convention various journalists “published articles portraying the imminent combat in heated prose” that they hoped or expected would take place when Baptists arrived in Salt Lake. But Shippo reported that “the expected confrontation failed to occur.”¹⁷ After all this planning and publicity, and despite the advance public relations hype, there was no religious mayhem in Salt Lake. Instead, the planned Crossover Salt Lake was a fizzle; there were no real fireworks and few public confrontations between Baptists and Latter-day Saints. The Saints were, as expected, courteous, while Baptist missionaries were timid; they did not distribute to the Saints the anti-Mormon tracts and books or the slick video that had been generated for their meeting in Salt Lake City. They merely invited those they contacted to give an SBC congregation a try, especially if they were unhappy with the church they currently were attending or did not have an affiliation. As expected, the Saints made a serious effort to be gracious, nonconfrontational hosts to the Baptists who attended the conference in Salt Lake City.

Displayed with other SBC literature at the meetings were pallets of the two anti-Mormon books offered to those attending the meeting. None of the literature produced by the SBC for Crossover Salt Lake set out a version of Baptist faith for the Saints. SBC officials seem, instead, to have had all those anti-Mormon materials prepared for consumption by Baptists who turned up in Salt Lake. SBC officials borrowed rhetoric from the anti-Mormon segment of the countercult in an

16. Shippo, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

17. Shippo, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

effort to inoculate Baptists so they would be not led astray by the faith of those they were about to encounter in Salt Lake City. This endeavor appears to have been an attempt at “boundary maintenance”—that is, an effort to keep the faithful from straying (or fighting among themselves, which has been known to happen)¹⁸ by conjuring for them a grand contest taking place just out of sight in which Holy Knights are encountering Diabolical Monsters. Be that as it may, the SBC anti-Mormon literature was not addressed to the Saints—its purpose was to indoctrinate Baptists and not to convert the Saints.

The “Mormon” Monstrosity Unmasked

In addition to *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*, another book, with the title *Mormonism Unmasked*,¹⁹ was marketed to those who attended the 1998 SBC meeting in Salt Lake. Shipps reported that the SBC “printed 12,500 copies of . . . *Mormonism Unmasked*, which put the ‘puzzle’ together to picture a pseudo-religion which threatened evangelical Christianity.”²⁰ This book was the project of Roberts, who was then directing the Interfaith Witness division of the NAMB. He also assisted in the production of a slick video entitled *The Mormon Puzzle*,²¹ which was widely distributed by the SBC before

18. According to Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake,” one of the more memorable instances of internecine squabbling, if not entirely a factional power move, within the SBC took place in 1985, when the “moderates,” then more or less in control of the denomination, were ousted by “conservatives” in a hostile takeover. More than 40,000 “messengers” attended the meeting in 1985, while a mere 8,000 turned up in Salt Lake. See Nancy T. Ammerman, *Baptist Battles: Social Change and Religious Conflict in the Southern Baptist Convention*, rev. ed. (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), for an account of the controversy in 1985 and its outcomes.

19. See R. Philip Roberts, *Mormonism Unmasked: Confronting the Contradictions between Mormon Beliefs and True Christianity* (Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman, 1998). It should be noted that the title selected by Phil Roberts for his screed is not original since the same title was employed much earlier. For details, see Louis Midgley, “A ‘Tangled Web’: The Walter Martin Miasma,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 381 n. 28. It is quite likely that neither Roberts nor his publisher knew of these earlier items with the same name.

20. Shipps, “Submission in Salt Lake.”

21. See *The Mormon Puzzle: Understanding and Witnessing to Latter-day Saints* (Alpha-reta, GA: North American Mission Board, Southern Baptist Convention, 1997).

and during the meeting in Salt Lake City. Roberts thanks various people at Broadman and Holman, the SBC publisher, “for the adroit and unusually fast way in which this book was produced,” as well as Sandra Tanner and Tal Davis “for working so quickly under the time constraints under which this book was produced.” Though Roberts is listed on both the cover and the title page of *Mormonism Unmasked* as the author of this book, six of the ten chapters were actually written by Sandra Tanner (3, 4, and 9) and Tal Davis (1, 5, and 7).²²

Though both *The Mormon Puzzle* and *Mormonism Unmasked* attack the Church of Jesus Christ and the faith of Latter-day Saints, the book is less irenic than the video. However, they are both well within the genre of aggressively adversarial “evangelism” that is typical of the countercult industry; they are not what one might expect from officials in a respectable, sophisticated, mainline Protestant denomination. Latter-day Saints seem to have ignored *Mormonism Unmasked*. Critical attention was, instead, focused more on *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*,²³ on the widely distributed video, and on the accompanying packet of anti-Mormon literature.²⁴

In addition to the sinister mask on the cover of *Mormonism Unmasked* and the lurid title setting the tone, the back cover declares that this volume will “lift the veil from one of the greatest deceptions in the history of religion.” Roberts claims to have demonstrated that “Mormonism is a fabricated and artificial form of Christianity. It is a new religion produced by the false prophet Joseph Smith.”²⁵ Other similar highly adversarial packaging sets the stage for the actual con-

22. For these details, see Roberts, “Acknowledgments,” in *Mormonism Unmasked*, vii. His own bibliography, posted on the MBTS Web page, however, describes Roberts merely as coauthor and contributor to *Mormonism Unmasked*.

23. See the series of essays devoted to this book in the *FARMS Review* 12/1 (2000): 175–213.

24. Daniel C. Peterson has critically examined *The Mormon Puzzle* and the other items in the package of anti-Mormon literature. See his “‘Shall They Not Both Fall into the Ditch?’” 14–17 (where the contents of the SBC package of materials are described and evaluated). Peterson does not include a response to the rather tasteless, acrimonious, inflammatory countercult anti-Mormon propaganda found in *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism* and in *Mormonism Unmasked*.

25. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 155.

tents of this book. Readers of *Mormonism Unmasked* are promised, with much florid rhetoric, that within the pages of this book they will learn how to “expose and put an end to their false teachings” (back cover). However, the book does not spell out exactly how Baptists who are inflamed by what they find in *Mormonism Unmasked* are “to put an end” to LDS teachings.

To “Pillory or Imprison Heretics”

One rather candid reviewer of *Mormonism Unmasked* reveals the kind of emotional excess this book might generate: “I am a conservative Christian,” the Reverend Dr. Daniel J. G. G. Block, who describes himself as a Lutheran pastor as well as a retired US Air Force chaplain, explains, “who heartily agrees with Mr. [Phil] Roberts that the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is not an orthodox Christian denomination.” That much, of course, could be expected. But the Reverend Block then adds the following curious comment: “On a purely personal basis, some small part of me yearns for the good old days when the orthodox were allowed to excommunicate, pillory or imprison heretics.”²⁶

Salt Lake City and the State of Deseret (now Utah), like Kirtland, Ohio; Independence, Missouri; and Nauvoo, Illinois, began as a place of refuge from the bigotry and persecution that was often aided and abetted by Protestant preachers who passionately believed, of course, that they were doing God a favor by assaulting the Saints. It was, however, also in the preachers’ own self-interest to picture the Saints being led by sinister, demonic forces. And it must not be forgotten that, in those idyllic days, in addition to being pilloried and imprisoned, heretics were occasionally even burned. (Both Protestants and Roman Catholics did such things back then.) Granted, those pillars of respectable Illinois society—the Carthage Greys—did not burn Joseph Smith. Instead, they lynched him. Those “good old days” also included, when the picture is properly fleshed out, various crusades and inquisitions,

26. The Reverend Block’s identity and remarks are taken from an Amazon.com reader’s review of *Mormonism Unmasked* (accessed 28 December 2005).

neither of which constitutes an enviable instance of Christian charity or even civility. So much for Reverend Block's reverie. As his remarks illustrate, the content of *Mormonism Unmasked* seems capable of agitating some rather malevolent passions even in one who appears to be an otherwise genteel pastor.

Garbling LDS Beliefs

It would be tedious, as well as unnecessary, to expose all the excesses and garbling in *Mormonism Unmasked*. However, I cannot resist quoting one or two examples from what can be found on virtually every page. After having granted, with much understatement, that "Christians *sometimes have varied views* regarding the millennium—whether it's literal or whether Christ will precede or follow the Christianization of the world,"²⁷ and then after misconstruing Latter-day Saint views on such matters as the future appearance or return of the Messiah, as well as on the resurrection, the judgment, and the millennium, Roberts announces that "secretive and magical are the best ways to describe the Mormon view of both the millennium and scripture."²⁸

Mormonism Unmasked was not written to present to the Saints an attractive version of Baptist ideology. Instead, it is adversarial—a kind of debater's handbook to be used by those who wish to attack the faith of the Saints. It fits securely within what can be called the confrontational mode of bashing typical of the countercult industry since its invention in the 1960s by Walter Martin.²⁹ Among the amusing and also distressing aspects of *Mormonism Unmasked*, if the scrambling of the faith of the Saints is overlooked, are the so-called witnessing points found at the end of each chapter.³⁰ These are tips on how to seduce the Saints with sophistry and guile.

27. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 119, emphasis added.

28. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 128.

29. See, for example, Midgley, "A 'Tangled Web,'" 371–434; and Midgley, "Anti-Mormonism and the Newfangled Countercult Culture," *FARMS Review of Books* 10/1 (1998): 271–340, for critical commentary on Walter Martin.

30. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 26, 44, 62, 94, 116–17, 132, 151.

In an effort to set out some of the differences between the faith of the Saints and the faith of competing factions within contemporary conservative Protestantism, Roberts grants that “Mormonism teaches that Christ provides a form of salvation for all.”³¹ The Saints, of course, believe in a potentially universal rather than in a strictly limited atonement. On this issue the Saints are unlike the more radical Calvinists who insist that Jesus atoned only for the sins of those saved at the moment of creation, when all of space and time, and everything that could possibly take place in human history, was created out of nothing, but did not redeem those many who in the instant in which they were created were also damned. The Saints affirm, instead, that all are moral agents and hence may choose to accept the merciful forgiveness of their sins offered by the Lord. But this is not what Roberts seems to have in mind. Instead, he claims that “Mormonism teaches that even if a person does not believe, he or she will be saved.”³² The assertion implies that Latter-day Saints believe that there is a universal salvation from sin—without faith—available for all. “Mormonism has devised,” according to Roberts, “a system where belief is not necessary for salvation.”³³ This is utter nonsense; it is so thoroughly wrong that it must constitute not a mistake in understanding a subtle point, but an intentionally false witness against the faith of the Saints. Nothing more can be said about it.

The Saints do not believe, and have never taught, that there is any salvation, including both justification and sanctification (or deification), apart from the atonement provided by Jesus of Nazareth—the Messiah or Christ. In the Book of Mormon, Moroni taught (and Latter-day Saints believe) that, “if ye by the grace of God are perfect in Christ, and deny not his power, then are ye sanctified in Christ by the grace of God, through the shedding of the blood of Christ, which is in the covenant of the Father unto the remission of your sins, that ye become holy, without spot” (Moroni 10:33). When the Saints covenant to take upon themselves his name and thereby become his seed

31. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 93.

32. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 93.

33. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 85.

or children, in addition to being justified, they are also offered the merciful gift of sanctification (or deification). Becoming holy is the ultimate gift of God made possible through “the shedding of the blood of Christ.” What may confuse Roberts, if he is confused rather than lacking probity, is the Latter-day Saint belief in a universal resurrection. But this is hard to believe since he insists, much like the Saints, that “it is clear that the Resurrection, according to the Bible, is both for the just and the unjust (Acts 24:15).”³⁴ When Roberts is not busy attacking the faith of the Saints, he also appears to believe in a universal resurrection.

Never Proselyting Christians, Merely Evangelizing the Heathen

SBC officials produced and marketed for Crossover Salt Lake an acutely flawed literature bashing the faith of Latter-day Saints. In addition, those materials circulated by the SBC were either dependent on or actually generated by well-known countercult anti-Mormons.³⁵ The packet of materials prepared for Crossover Salt Lake and the two anti-Mormon books (supported by the video) might be seen as part of a defensive effort—by a brand of Baptists. Was the confrontational and adversarial mode of apologetics directed in 1998 by the SBC to their own communicants rather than to the Latter-day Saints? But if so, could not SBC officials have engaged in boundary maintenance in a somewhat less militant, outlandish way?

There are, of course, some striking differences in content between the faith of Latter-day Saints and the beliefs held by various groups of contemporary conservative Protestants. Instead of focusing on these, Baptists (and others) seem inclined to insist on what are bizarre stereotypes of the faith of the Saints. The Saints have never taught that there is any salvation from sin (or from mortality) other than through

34. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 85.

35. For example, in 1998 the SBC used Mike Reynolds and Robert McKay, both of whom were then employed by the SBC (which at that time operated the countercult agency called Utah Missions, Inc., in Marlow, Oklahoma). The SBC also made use of Sandra (and the late Jerald) Tanner of Utah Lighthouse Ministry in Salt Lake City to assist in the preparation of their anti-Mormon propaganda.

the atonement of Jesus Christ. Encountering what seemed to me to be both hostile and mistaken opinions espoused at Crossover Salt Lake concerning my faith made me wonder why SBC officials turned what are clearly matters of subtle interpretation into the charge that the Saints “teach a different *person* of Christ.” Whatever the dissimilarities, which I am not at all inclined to deny or downplay, but to stress, these do not involve a “different person” but rather different understandings of Jesus of Nazareth. Baptists (and other conservative Protestants) appear unwilling to grant this.

Why do conservative Protestants routinely set forth inaccurate, sometimes bizarre, and often highly offensive opinions about the faith of the Saints? This behavior, I believe, is linked to a need to justify to themselves efforts to evangelize the Saints. In *Mormonism Unmasked*, Roberts, who was at the center of much of Crossover Salt Lake, offers an explanation of how they view evangelization, which may help explain their use of what the Saints see as numerous perverse misrepresentations of the faith of the Saints. He explains that “to evangelize means merely to share the good news that Jesus died for the sins of the world.”³⁶ To share this message with whom? His answer: with those who are not aware of it or who reject this message.

Evangelicals complain that “Mormon missionaries don’t evangelize, they proselytize.”³⁷ Unlike Protestants, Latter-day Saints have always overtly engaged in proselyting; our mission is to everyone. We take our message to those who are already churching. We have never distinguished between proselyting those who are already in some sense Christians and evangelizing the heathen. This explains in part why the Church of Jesus Christ is seen as a threat by Protestant preachers

36. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 155–56.

37. Mosser, “The Saints Go Marching On,” 68. I have not been able to determine when the distinction between witnessing and proselyting entered contemporary conservative Protestant circles. This distinction, whatever one might think of its usefulness in putting the lid on “sheep stealing” among Protestant denominations, has no warrant in the New Testament, where a *proselyte* was a stranger who had become a Jewish convert. The followers of Jesus—Paul, for example—“proselyted” or recruited these pious “God-fearing” folks.

and also helps to explain why SBC officials fashioned anti-Mormon propaganda for the annual meeting in Salt Lake City in 1998.

Given their own understanding of missions and evangelizing, it seems that those who are anxious to evangelize the Saints—that is, to attack the faith of the Saints—must insist that the Church of Jesus Christ is not Christian because it “teaches a different *work* or *atonement* of Christ.”³⁸ The Saints must be pictured by conservative Protestants as heathens so that they can justify their evangelizing efforts to fellow Protestants; the Saints must be portrayed as pagans. Doing this demands efforts that are, from the perspective of the Saints, adversarial or confrontational precisely because what must be shown is that those being evangelized are *not Christian at all*.

Despite all the muddled, offensive stuff in *Mormonism Unmasked*, it actually has one virtue—it contains language that explains why those who see the Church of Jesus Christ as a challenge or a threat must claim that the Saints worship a *different Jesus*, have a *different gospel*, a *different atonement*, and so forth. If Latter-day Saints are to be “evangelized,” they cannot be portrayed as profoundly heretical Christians since Protestants claim to witness and not to proselyte. The faith of the Saints must be attacked root and branch and not merely corrected. This may explain why even some moderate evangelicals refuse to acknowledge that the Saints believe that Jesus of Nazareth is our Lord and Savior and that he atoned “for the sins of the world.”

Since the 1998 SBC meetings in Salt Lake were essentially open to the public, it was possible for Latter-day Saints to view what went on. The speakers insisted that Baptists never proselyte fellow Christians even when they consider their faith inferior or deeply flawed.³⁹ Instead, they claimed, they are only seeking the unconverted—that is, those who are not Christian as they understand that label. This explains why, under their own informal rules, Latter-day Saints must be pictured as essentially heathens.

38. *Mormonism Unmasked*, 84.

39. In addition, it was distressing to witness Rauni Higley (and her husband, Dennis), both former Latter-day Saints, blast away at their former faith, while drawing considerable applause from obviously appreciative “messengers” assembled at the SBC meetings in Salt Lake City.

If conservative Protestants are, it seems, to operate under their own understanding of missions, to witness to fellow Christians, even of an inferior brand, would be proselytizing (or “sheep stealing” from another denomination’s fold). This helps to explain why the SBC has adopted the outlandish rhetoric of the anti-Mormon element of the countercult movement. It also explains why countercultists have fashioned what are, to the Saints, distressing slogans and stereotypes—that is, why they are busy “bearing false witness.” Getting clear on this matter helps to clarify what motivates the sectarian anti-Mormonism simmering on the margins of the evangelical movement.

Continuing the Onslaught?

Craig Blomberg and Stephen Robinson, in their famous conversation,⁴⁰ did not deal with the question of whether Latter-day Saints are Christians. This seems to have been an important reason that their book did not receive a positive response from countercultists, who wanted Blomberg to deny that the Church of Jesus Christ is Christian.⁴¹ In 1998, Blomberg claimed that the bulk of the comments from evangelicals in response to *How Wide the Divide?* had “been quite positive and encouraging, but a minority, almost exclusively emerging out of the countercult industry, has at times proved quite critical.”⁴² This is an understatement. Blomberg was assailed by countercultists who claimed that he had caved in to Stephen Robinson.⁴³ Blomberg’s

40. See Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1997).

41. It is noteworthy that the latest project of Living Hope Ministries, notorious for their deeply flawed attack videos, will produce another video that will, they claim, answer “clearly, credibly, and concisely” the question “Is Mormonism Christian?” See “Update on the New Project” available at www.lhvm.org/email/2006-09-a1.htm (accessed 12 September 2006). Those at Living Hope Ministries insist “that once you move beyond the double-speak and muddled terminology, the essential doctrines of historic Christianity are rejected by Mormonism, and vice versa.”

42. Craig Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*, by R. Philip Roberts, *Denver Journal: An Online Review of Current Biblical and Theological Studies* 1 (1998): no pagination; see www.denverseminary.edu/dj/articles1998/0200/0212.php (accessed 1 September 2006).

43. James R. White—who specializes in debating with Roman Catholics, who has written two flawed anti-Mormon books, and who has blasted away at fellow Protestants

immediate response was that he did not grant that the faith of the Saints is Christian, and he soon published an essay spelling out his stance. His conclusion was that “the claim that Mormonism is not Christian is neither intolerant nor extreme nor uncharitable.”⁴⁴

Blomberg also responded to comments by countercultists about his conversation with Robinson. His remarks set out forcefully what he thinks of the faith of the Saints. He praised, if not the packaging, at least the content of *Mormonism Unmasked*. He claimed that, “in quality of response” the “pride of place” “must now be given to Dr. Roberts’ new book [*Mormonism Unmasked*] and a very nicely produced accompanying video entitled *The Mormon Puzzle*.”⁴⁵ In a detailed summary of *Mormonism Unmasked*, Blomberg reports that the book

begins with a fictitious but realistic scenario of how two Mormon missionaries might lead nominal Christians into their church. Roberts then proceeds to outline the image Mormons wish to market, setting the stage for the need for true Bible-believing Christians to be able to give a compelling response to the LDS. Next Roberts turns to a brief history of Joseph Smith and the founding of the Mormon church, replete with all of the historical contradictions in Smith’s writings

who are not, in his estimation, sufficiently Calvinist—claims to have published “the first full-length book to interact with” *How Wide the Divide?* However, Blomberg insists that White’s *Is the Mormon My Brother? Discerning the Differences between Mormonism and Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Bethany House, 1997) was a completed manuscript before he learned of *How Wide the Divide?* According to Blomberg, White “was then able to go back and intersperse a variety of comments and footnotes superficially interacting with our book.” Blomberg also claims that *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism* “is an even more direct and intentional response, with four of its five chapters matching the topics and sequence of the four main chapters of *How Wide?* (Scripture, God, Christ, Salvation).” See Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

44. See Craig Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 332.

45. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*. Blomberg was, however, annoyed that neither the book nor the video mentions his conversation with Stephen Robinson, “even while clearly borrowing our sequence of topics, echoing many of the identical arguments I introduced in the portions of the book I authored and responding to many of Robinson’s distinctive approaches (while referring only to an interview with Robinson, excerpts of which were featured in the video).”

and failures in his moral character. Roberts then addresses the various distinctive doctrines of the LDS faith, stressing that at their core the Mormon doctrine of God is polytheistic, the Jesus of the LDS is not the same Jesus as found in the New Testament, the road to exaltation is filled with a burdensome demand of obeying commands and performing numerous good works, and the additional “Scriptures” beyond the Old and New Testaments of the LDS reflect Smith’s increasing departure from orthodoxy and contain both internal contradictions as well as both unverified and falsified historical claims, vis-à-vis external sources. Closing chapters deal with distinctive Mormon eschatology, the contrasts between biblical and LDS priesthoods and temple ceremonies and suggestions for how Christians can lovingly but clearly witness to their faith and to the inherent implausibility of the LDS gospel.⁴⁶

Mormonism Unmasked, *The Counterfeit Gospel of Mormonism*, and *Is the Mormon My Brother?* are, according to Blomberg, marred by “sensationalist titles,” and their “cover blurbs make it unlikely that many actual Mormons will begin to read this literature.”⁴⁷ He wrongly claims that

Evangelical Christians are used to basing hermeneutics on authorial intent, going back to what original founders and authors of sacred writings said and meant in their original contexts, and so it is difficult often for us to grasp this completely inverted hermeneutic of the LDS. As a result, Roberts’ work, like so many of his predecessors, will simply be dismissed as irrelevant by people of Stephen Robinson’s stripe because it continues to parade and rebut statements of previous LDS authorities that are no longer necessarily believed by all in the church.⁴⁸

46. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

47. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

48. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

Roberts was not, Blomberg grants, entirely happy with *How Wide the Divide?* The complaints by Roberts were (1) that Robinson does not speak for Latter-day Saints, (2) that significant elements in the faith of the Saints were neglected in that book, and also (3) that “the irenic and courteous dialogue” that Blomberg had with Robinson “is simply out of place. When Christianity confronts a ‘cult,’ more consistent and combative evangelism is instead the primary order of the day.”⁴⁹ However, it appears that Phil Roberts himself is nothing if not combative.

Still, Blomberg insisted that “what makes Roberts’ book and video stand out from the pack is that without ever saying so, they refute each of these three points themselves!” And “Robinson features as one of the two most prominent LDS spokesmen interviewed in the video, and several extracts from that video are quoted in prominent places in Roberts’ book. Clearly, Robinson is being taken as representative of the current church and its leadership.”⁵⁰ Blomberg also claims that the SBC video matches the

exact sequence of the chapters of *How Wide?*, including at times mirroring the outline of the discussion within a given chapter. But neither book nor video, with rare exceptions, ever footnotes or documents in any way their repeated indebtedness to other Christian authors. Documentation is almost exclusively reserved for LDS sources. Finally, in ways often untrue of their predecessors, Roberts’ book and video give significant and sympathetic press to current LDS perspectives. In fact, numerous excerpts of the video come from the LDS church itself and portray Mormonism as highly attractive to many outsiders.⁵¹

“If a recurring fear of critics of *How Wide?* has been that giving Robinson equal time might in fact lead some readers to judge the case for Mormonism more compelling than the case for Christianity,”

49. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*. Roberts mentions confrontation and evangelization and says nothing about learning from the other and improving one’s understanding by engaging in a conversation.

50. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

51. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*.

Blomberg insists, “the same must surely be said of Roberts’ [SBC] video.”⁵² Blomberg does not see this as a weakness since what he calls “*speaking the truth in love*, like acting with justice and grace, demands that we present as objectively accurate perspectives on all competing worldviews as possible. We then simultaneously make the most compelling case we can for our own worldview, and Roberts’ book excels in this respect.”⁵³ But not from my perspective.

“The Strange Work of Love”

The Saints are often told by our critics that the Bible warrants attacks on the faith of others and hence on our faith. Had not Paul urged the Ephesians to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15)? Without directly citing the language he borrowed from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, Blomberg asserts that *Unmasking Mormonism* is both true and loving. He also insists that, unlike Latter-day Saints, who he imagines wait passively for their leaders to shift their beliefs this way or that, evangelical beliefs constitute a “worldview” grounded in, if not entirely derived from, the Bible alone. Evangelicals “are used to basing hermeneutics on authorial intent, going back to what original founders and authors of sacred writings said and meant in their original contexts.” But Blomberg, in this instance, lifts a phrase out of context (from Paul’s letter to the Ephesians) to justify something that is neither true nor loving.

Paul seems to have been urging those who received his letter to fulfill their calling as disciples of Jesus and thereby to cease being blown about, much like contemporary warring sectarians, by every breeze of doctrine. There should, instead, be unity even with a diversity of divine gifts within the community of Saints. Paul also seems

52. It seems at least possible that the initial response by Baptists (especially those indoctrinated by the countercult) to the SBC video fashioned by Phil Roberts was that it presented Latter-day Saints and their faith in a far too positive light. If this was a serious concern of those in the NAMB and among SBC officials generally, some damage control was necessary. This may explain why Roberts in a matter of a few weeks hurriedly rushed *Mormonism Unmasked* into print in an effort to provide SBC messengers with much more stridently anti-Mormon propaganda.

53. Blomberg, review of *Mormonism Unmasked*, emphasis added.

to advise those who have chosen to follow Christ to mature in their conduct one to another, to serve him as their master by learning to speak *to each other* truth in love, something the Ephesians may not have been inclined to do. The often amusing internecine battles both within the countercult and among evangelicals generally over the proper understanding of the Bible illustrates just such a war over doctrine, where various winds blow this way and that, depending on the ideological orientation of preachers and also the tastes of the audience to which the diatribes are directed. Would not Paul's advice, I wonder, apply to contemporary quarreling sectarians? From my perspective, an appropriate application of Paul's admonition would be for all who genuinely wish to follow Jesus Christ to strive to honor the one they claim as their Lord and Savior by ceasing to speak, listen to, purchase, or publish hateful commentary directed at the sincere faith of others. Unfortunately, it is necessary to point out that books attacking the faith of the Saints, while larded with insidious falsehoods, insults, and rhetorical violence, are also bathed in the self-flattering language of love.⁵⁴

The SBC in Salt Lake City in 1998 promulgated what I believe are untruths about the faith of Latter-day Saints. They also justified what they did as an act of love. Perhaps without actually following Paul Tillich, a famous German-American Protestant theologian, officials of the SBC assume that "it is the strange work of love to destroy that which is against love."⁵⁵ Seven years have now passed since that

54. Recent examples include the following books: Wilbur Lingle, *Approaching Mormons in Love: How to Witness Effectively without Arguing* (Fort Washington, PA: CLC Publications, 2005). Lingle is described on the cover of this book as a "World Renowned Expert on Mormonism." Still another such book is David L. Rowe, *I Love Mormons: A New Way to Share Christ with Latter-day Saints* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2005). This screed is actually endorsed by Craig L. Blomberg, as well as by David Neff, senior editor of *Christianity Today*, and Ken Mulholland, founding president of the Salt Lake Theological Seminary. For the crucial details on both of these books, see the booknotes in the *FARMS Review* 17/2 (2005): 494–98. See also Mark J. Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons*, 2nd ed. (Milwaukee, WI: WELS Outreach Resources [Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod], 1998).

55. Paul Tillich, *Love, Power and Justice* (New York: Oxford, 1954), 49. This is one of the more striking expressions in the rhetorical repertoire of Paul Tillich (1886–1965), the famous German-American Protestant theologian. Tillich glossed language once

unfortunate Crossover Salt Lake debacle. With the publication in 2005 of an entire issue of *Southern Baptist Theological Journal* devoted to “Mormonism,” we have an opportunity to see if the official SBC understanding of the Church of Jesus Christ has deepened, matured, or moderated. Have SBC officials managed to jettison some of the countercult calumny about the faith of the Saints? Are there signs of substantial shifts in the SBC trajectory on this matter?

A Verdict in the “Forum”

Wellum, the author of the editorial that introduces the collection of essays on Mormonism in the *SBJT*, avows that the purpose of these essays is “to encourage all of us [evangelicals] to take seriously the challenge of taking the gospel, in love, humility, and conviction, to our Mormon friends and neighbors” (p. 3). Professor Wellum, who serves as editor of this journal, assumes that he speaks for “historic, biblical Christianity” (p. 2) or for the orthodox biblical version of Christian faith. This, of course, is to be expected. He steadfastly opposes “a cult or a contrary religion” (p. 2) with “different gospels” (p. 3). Mormonism “proclaims *another* Christ and a *false* gospel” and operates with an “alien worldview” (p. 2, emphasis in original). This language sets the stage for the usual aggressively adversarial polemic against the Church of Jesus Christ.

The most directly polemical essays in this issue of the *SBJT* are included in what is called “The *SBJT* Forum: Speaking the Truth in Love” (pp. 70–81). Five authors respond to questions posed by the editors of the *SBJT* concerning the seeming challenge posed by the Church of Jesus Christ and how best to respond to it. In an editorial headnote introducing “The *SBJT* Forum” (p. 70), which is a regular feature of

employed by Martin Luther in his Heidelberg Disputation of 1518. Luther made a distinction between what he called the *opus alienum Dei*, which kills the carnal in the believer, and the *opus proprium*, which brings to life a new being. Tillich modified for his own purposes the meaning of what Luther had written by substituting the English word *strange* for the Latin cognate of *alien* and the word *love* for *God*, and then by adding the idea that there is a crucial and legitimate aspect of what Tillich understood as “love”—that is, what he thought of as this strange kind of love that involves the destructive exercise of power here below.

this journal, Russell D. Moore⁵⁶ indicates that five “significant thinkers,” including himself, R. Philip Roberts,⁵⁷ Robert Stewart,⁵⁸ John Divito,⁵⁹ and Richard Abanes,⁶⁰ “have been asked specific questions to which they have provided written responses” (p. 70). The goal was to produce a “unified presentation” on “topics of interest” (p. 70).

Moore responds to the question “How can evangelical Protestants engage Latter-day Saints with historic Christianity?” He charges that the Church of Jesus Christ “is in reality little more than an Americanized version of a Canaanite fertility cult” and claims that those confronted with the challenge of the Mormon cult “should pay attention to Paul’s proclamation of the gospel to a cultural milieu that closely resembles Salt Lake City: the pagan enclave of Ephesus” (p. 71). What this entails is that the evangelical “must not back away from the sad reality that Mormonism is *not* even remotely Christian” (p. 71, emphasis in original).

Moore informs his readers that they “must remember” that they do “not convince Mormons with rational arguments alone” (p. 71). “We need not just ask whether Mormons believe things that are untrue and dangerous; they do” (p. 71). Instead, those confronting Latter-day

56. Russell D. Moore is Albert Mohler’s chief assistant at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

57. Phil Roberts is currently president of the Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. For additional biographical information, see www.emnr.org. Click on “Our Board,” and scroll down (accessed 4 August 2006). See also MBTS Web page at www.mbts.edu/About/index.htm and click on “about the president” (accessed 4 August 2006).

58. Robert B. Stewart is an assistant professor of philosophy and theology at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. For additional biographical information, see www.emnr.org. Click on “Our Board” and scroll down (accessed 4 August 2006).

59. John Divito, currently a student at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, is a former Latter-day Saint who also seems to work for Bill McKeever’s Mormonism Research Ministry (p. 78).

60. Richard Abanes (see p. 79) began his career as a Broadway singer/dancer. He now makes his living writing books for those on the margins of conservative Protestantism. He is the author of, among many other potboilers, the widely sold *One Nation under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002, rev. 2003), and *Becoming Gods* (Eugene, OR: Harvest House, 2004). For commentary on Abanes, see Rockwell D. Porter, “A Dancer/Journalist’s Anti-Mormon Diatribe,” *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): 259–72; and Louis Midgley, “On Caliban Mischief,” *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): xv–xviii.

Saints must find ways of demonstrating that “deep within their hearts, Mormons know that Joseph Smith is a fraud” (p. 72).⁶¹ Assuming this to be the case, “evangelicals should take more than a scattershot approach to knocking down Mormon claims (although this is necessary)” (p. 71). What he calls “proof-text[ing] argumentation” will not necessarily conquer “this kind of deception. . . . It does mean presenting the big picture of Scripture” (p. 72), which he distinguishes from “the irrational ‘burning in the bosom’ of our Mormon missionary friends” (p. 72). He insists that the experience of Jesus’s disciples on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:32) was not “the anti-propositional relativism of postmodern epistemology” (p. 72), as if either of these have ever been an element in the faith of Latter-day Saints.

“Nothing Much Has Changed”

In what turns out to be the crucial showpiece of this issue of the *SBJT* (pp. 72–75), Roberts was asked by its editors to respond to the following question: “Can you provide any reflections on recent dialogue that has taken place between some evangelicals and Mormons?” (p. 72).⁶² Roberts claims to know exactly what is going on, and he

61. He recommends, for this purpose, Grant Palmer’s *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*. Palmer is portrayed as one who “nonetheless remains a committed Mormon—because,” according to Moore, “he loves the social and theological vision of LDS culture” (p. 70)—that is, he is merely a cultural Mormon. Consulting Palmer in an effort to understand the faith of the Saints is not entirely unlike consulting Robert Price—who doubts that there was even a Jesus of Nazareth and who is essentially an atheist, but who enjoys the wonder of what he believes are mere myths and the spectacle of Christian worship—or the retired Anglican Bishop John Shelby Spong for an understanding of conservative Protestantism. Phil Roberts also appeals to Palmer for polemical purposes (see p. 75). See reviews of Grant Palmer’s *An Insider’s Views of Mormon Origins* by Davis Bitton, Steven C. Harper, Mark Ashurst-McGee, and Louis Midgley in *FARMS Review* 15/2 (2003): 257–410, and another review by James B. Allen in *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 235–85.

62. Phil Roberts had his remarks published in the fall 2005 issue of the *Midwestern Journal of Theology* under the title “What’s Going On in Salt Lake City?” This article can be readily accessed from the Midwest Baptist Theological Seminary Web page by going to www.mbts.edu/Resources/Journal/index.htm and clicking on the title of the essay under “Downloadable Articles” (accessed 4 September 2006). The version in the *Midwestern Journal of Theology* is superior to what appeared in the *SBJT*. For example, in the *SBJT* version of his essay, Roberts mentions “Grant H. Parker.” This has been corrected to “Grant H. Palmer” in his own magazine. I quote and cite the *SBJT* version, which I silently correct where necessary.

believes it is not good news for evangelicals. He indicates that in 1998, when Crossover Salt Lake was about to take place, he “encouraged Dr. Paige Patterson, then president of the Southern Baptist Convention, to write President Hinckley. With a bit of my involvement,” Roberts boasts, “he did so speedily and enthusiastically” (p. 75).⁶³ The core issues, as one might expect, given the SBC enthralment with countercult rhetoric, were “disagreements about Jesus Christ” (p. 75). President Hinckley was invited to meet with Patterson and to thrash out these disagreements in “a respectful and personal conversation in a private setting at any time and place” (p. 75).

Patterson, who is president of Southeastern Baptist Seminary, suggested that President Hinckley and his counselors could be guests at this institution for this proposed interfaith dialogue on whose Jesus is the real biblical one. Roberts laments that “Dr. Patterson has not received a reply from President Hinckley” (p. 75). For Roberts, the failure of President Hinckley to respond to Patterson’s call for a debate—along with several other developments, which he describes from his perspective—is a significant indication that evangelicals are not about to evangelize the Church of Jesus Christ.

Contrary to the enthusiastic expectations that have arisen among a few evangelicals following the conversation between Stephen Robinson and Craig Blomberg and the subsequent meetings between a few evangelical and Latter-day Saint scholars held annually since then, Roberts sets forth a number of reasons why he believes that “nothing much has changed in Salt Lake City” (p. 73). Some evangelicals seem to believe that they are part of a conversation in which they are gradually evangelizing the Church of Jesus Christ. They expect (or at least hope) that radical changes in what the Saints believe will soon flow from these conversations. “What’s going on in Salt Lake City?” Roberts asks. “Are Mormons coming to their theological senses? Is there a doctrinal seismic shift afoot akin to what occurred with the Worldwide Church of God just a few years ago when that group renounced their heretical views and embraced evangelical theology?”

63. Roberts reproduces nearly two hundred words from a letter sent by Paige Patterson to President Gordon B. Hinckley challenging him to a “true dialogue among faiths” (p. 75).

While I hope so, in my opinion, a more sober assessment demonstrates that this is hardly the case” (p. 73). Since his preferred mode of evangelizing is combative and confrontational, Roberts is rightly skeptical of the efforts of Richard Mouw, president of Fuller Theological Seminary, and his associates, and also of Gregory Johnson, who operates Standing Together Ministries in Lehi, Utah.⁶⁴

Negotiating Surrender?

The apparent goal of Mouw and his associates is to negotiate with some LDS scholars and then eventually with the Brethren, who they hope can be talked into making shifts that will turn the Church of Jesus Christ into another evangelical denomination. What fuels this illusion is the story that is told about the shift from what they consider a cult to an evangelical denomination that took place in one faction of the Worldwide Church of God after the death of Herbert W. Armstrong (1892–1986).⁶⁵ This event provides evangelicals with a model for shifting from efforts to evangelize individual Latter-day Saints to evangelizing the entire Church of Jesus Christ through meetings first with a few key LDS scholars and then eventually with the Brethren. They look to what they claim took place in the Worldwide Church of God, which I believe they misunderstand and misrepresent, and also to certain shifts in the ideology of Seventh-day Adventists, as a model for their efforts to

64. For Greg Johnson’s Standing Together Ministries, see www.standingtogether.org (accessed 5 September 2006).

65. The standard explanation for what has taken place in the Worldwide Church of God since the death in 1986 of Herbert W. Armstrong, its founder, is J. Michael Feazell’s *The Liberation of the Worldwide Church of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001). Feazell speaks for one of the factions of Armstrong’s followers that remained loyal to Joseph W. Tkach, who in 1986 took over as pastor general of the church until his son, Joseph W. Tkach Jr., replaced him in 1995. Under his watch, the Worldwide Church of God made the changes necessary to satisfy critics and in 1997 was admitted to the National Association of Evangelicals. Feazell’s account of these schisms and shifts in Armstrong’s “radio church” has been endorsed by leading evangelicals. This account of the shifts in Armstrong’s movement from “cult” to full evangelical respectability provides the model for what some evangelicals hope to accomplish through conversations with Latter-day Saints. What actually took place in the empire that Herbert W. Armstrong amassed was something on the order of the collapse of Enron. One faction was able to keep the name and a bit of the wealth by backing away from Armstrong’s more bizarre ideas.

move the Brethren away from Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon that will eventually, they hope, lead the Church of Jesus Christ to seek membership in the National Association of Evangelicals.

Greg Johnson, who has been involved in facilitating meetings between Latter-day Saint and evangelical scholars, brought J. Michael Feazell, currently senior advisor to Joseph Tkach Jr., the pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, to Salt Lake and showed him around. The stridently anti-Mormon people at Living Hope Ministries, whose preferred mode of evangelization of Latter-day Saints is the attack video, saw an opportunity to produce a video on the Worldwide Church of God entitled *Called to Be Free*.⁶⁶

Preaching in the Tabernacle and the Aftermath

One of Johnson's projects was to bring Ravi Zacharias, who heads a lucrative international ministry,⁶⁷ to Utah to give a series of speeches aimed at evangelizing Latter-day Saints. One of these talks was delivered on 14 November 2004 by Zacharias in the Tabernacle in Salt Lake City. "This unique event," according to Phil Roberts, "apparently was the brainchild of 'Standing Together'—an ad hoc ecumenical Mormon-evangelical alliance led by former LDS member and Baptist

66. This seventy-four minute video recounts the developments within the primary faction of Herbert W. Armstrong's once hugely successful radio ministry and can be ordered at www.lhvm.org/wcg.htm (accessed 4 September 2006). It is marketed by Greg Johnson's Standing Together Ministries in cooperation with Living Hope Ministries. For two complimentary accounts of how Greg Johnson was instrumental in getting Joel Kramer and Scott Johnson at Living Hope Ministries involved in producing the video entitled *Called to Be Free*, which tells of the changes that took place nearly a decade ago in the Worldwide Church of God, and of how this video can be used to evangelize Latter-day Saints, see Scott Johnson, "Making All Things New: A Miracle of Modern Reformation," in an electronic version of a newsletter circulated by the Living Hope Ministries entitled *The Fieldworker*, which appeared in spring 2004. See www.thefieldworker.com/spr04txt.htm#a4 (accessed 12 September 2006). Essentially the same story is told in considerable detail by Joseph Tkach Jr., pastor general of the Worldwide Church of God, in a "Member Letter," dated December 2004, that was sent to all the pastors of his church. See www.wcg.org/caribbean/memberletter1204jt.htm (accessed 12 September 2006). See also www.standingtogether.org. Then go to "In the News," and scroll down to the comment on the Worldwide Church of God, Standing Together, in Salt Lake, dated 11 December 2003.

67. For further information on Ravi Zacharias, see the book note on his book *The Real Face of Atheism* in the *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 370.

pastor, Greg Johnson” (p. 72). This is inaccurate. Standing Together Ministries is not, as Roberts claimed, an “ecumenical Mormon-evangelical alliance,” but merely Johnson’s effort to evangelize Latter-day Saints.

Johnson somehow managed to have Zacharias address an evangelical rally in the Tabernacle. Zacharias gave one of his typically flamboyant stump speeches. Phil Roberts complains that he “avoided the particulars of just how and in what ways the Jesus Christ of evangelical thought differed or contrasted with the Jesus of Latter-day reckoning” (p. 73). This, he grants, might have been excusable. What annoyed Roberts were the introductory remarks by Mouw,⁶⁸ who “came to the podium to make a surprise statement. He proceeded to apologize and offer lamentations on how Mormons and the teachings of Mormonism had been abused, misrepresented, and caricatured by evangelicals, particularly those involved in counter-cult ministries” (p. 73). Mouw described for those gathered in the Salt Lake Tabernacle how a group of evangelicals, which includes Greg Johnson, have been meeting twice a year “over the past half-dozen years” with some LDS scholars. Then he announced that he is “now convinced that we evangelicals have often seriously misrepresented the beliefs and practices of the Mormon community.” He added that “indeed . . . we have sinned against you. The God of the Scriptures makes it clear that it is a terrible thing to *bear false witness* against our neighbors, and we have been guilty of that sort of transgression in things we have said about you.”⁶⁹

According to Roberts, evangelicals responded to Mouw’s comments “in various ways, ranging from mild approbation to disappointment and rage” (p. 73). Mouw, again according to Roberts, defended his remarks by “stating that he knew of only two persons that he had in mind when he apologized and those were the late Walter Martin, author of *The Kingdom of the Cults*, and Dave Hunt, Christian apologist and author” (p. 73).

68. For details, see Louis Midgley, “Cowan on the Countercult,” *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): 401–3.

69. Richard Mouw, “Response to Criticism of Richard Mouw (We Have Sinned against You),” available at www.standingtogether.org/responses_mouw.doc (accessed 2 December 2004, but no longer available).

When pressured by his critics, Professor Mouw identified Martin and Hunt as prime examples of evangelicals guilty of having offended both God and Latter-day Saints by flagrantly bearing false witness against them. Contrary to what Roberts claims, however, Mouw did not appear to indicate that he was able to identify only two persons for whom he was apologizing. Instead, he gave two well-known, striking examples of disreputable behavior against the Saints by evangelicals. He could, I believe, have mentioned Phil Roberts too, had he been aware of his anti-Mormon diatribes. The irony is that in October 2003 Ravi Zacharias had allowed his name to appear as general editor of the most recent edition of Walter Martin's dreadful book.⁷⁰

Roberts argued that the hope that the Latter-day Saints are about to renounce the historical foundations of their faith and become just another evangelical denomination is misplaced since “nothing much has changed.” He argues that Greg Johnson and Richard Mouw and his team of evangelicals have been used by those he calls “LDS public relations moguls” (p. 74) in an attempt to make the Church of Jesus Christ appear “more mainstream” and “even distinctly evangelical” but “without giving away anything of substance” (p. 74). Roberts then asks the question: “Do any of these developments carry the hope of possible change?” His answer is “Not at all” (p. 75). The reason is that “at the present time, LDS church leadership displays no indication of making doctrinal adjustments” (p. 75). (On this issue, Roberts is clearly right.) Instead, “they are doubtlessly desirous to see impressions altered, though. This desire,” according to Roberts, “is evident in the amount of time and money spent on trying to gain acceptance from mainstream Christianity” (p. 75). On the latter issue, Roberts is wrong. He makes the same mistake that Mouw and his associates make. The Saints have no desire or need for an evangelical seal of approval. Evangelicals should remember—we proselyte.

When the Saints object to countercult distortions, Roberts takes this as evidence that they are “trying to gain acceptance from mainstream Christianity,” by which he means approval from one noisy fac-

70. See the book note on Walter Martin's *The Kingdom of the Cults*, Ravi Zacharias, gen. ed. (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House, 2003), in *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2003): 362.

tion of conservative Protestants. Such has never been the case. But misunderstandings on this issue fuel the illusions held by both those who engage in confrontational evangelizing and those who think that they are about to negotiate a surrender by engaging in civil conversation with a few Latter-day Saints. To the extent that Phil Roberts can be taken as speaking for the Southern Baptist Convention, it seems clear that no mellowing has taken place since the debacle in Salt Lake in 1998 that he helped to engineer.⁷¹

Some Moderation?

But some of the language in the summer 2005 issue of the *SBJT* suggests a certain moderation. Richard Abanes, for example, insists that evangelicals should not indulge in mocking their Mormon adversaries (p. 80). Citing Ephesians 4:15 and 2 Timothy 2:24–26—he reads these verses as warranting countercult activities—Abanes urges his fellow anti-Mormons to follow the strictures found in these passages that seem to him to require that one approach the unbeliever both “in love” and with “gentleness and respect” (p. 79). He laments that, “unfortunately, these . . . two passages often take a backseat to what becomes,” for evangelicals, “an overriding aim of witnessing—that is, making sure that someone realizes he is wrong” (p. 79). Abanes is generous; he grants that “Mormons are *not* always ‘lying’ or ‘dodging the issues’ or ‘seeking to deceive.’ It is,” he admits, “true that *some* Mormons resort to such tactics” (p. 80). He gives no examples. And he skirts the issue of the scandal of misrepresentations aimed at the faith of the Saints by his countercult associates. He was trained as a countercultist by Walter Martin and has remained, he insists, loyal to Hank Hanegraaff, who wrested control of Martin’s Christian Research Institute from those clearly dedicated to the interests of the late master countercultist. Abanes has never taken responsibility for the excesses and clumsy lapses found in *One Nation under Gods*, which is his own primary attack on the faith of the Saints.

71. For a Baptist assessment of what is found in the summer issue of the *SBJT*, see Jeff Robinson, “SBTS Journal Examines Mormon Challenge to Christianity,” *Baptist Press [BP] News*, 23 September 2005. See www.bpnews.net/printerfriendly.asp?ID=21713 (accessed 5 September 2006).

Apparently no apologies are necessary since only a few cosmetic changes appear in the second edition.

Robert Stewart is a bit less irenic. He advises his readers that “the question of what is ‘official’ Mormon doctrine is sometimes merely a smokescreen intended to divert attention away from problematic Mormon beliefs” (p. 77). Since his mode of evangelizing is adversarial, he advises his readers to force the Saints to take a position; do not let them slide around awkward questions. Demand that they support their views biblically (p. 77). The goal in confronting the Saints is “to make the individual Mormon speak for himself, and [to] insist on logical consistency and biblical support” (p. 78). What Stewart recommends is more bashing with proof texts lifted from the Bible. John Divito—who explains how he came out of Mormonism, repented of his sins, was born again, and who now pushes his understanding of the Bible—is in the same mold as Stewart.

Defending a Worldview

The summer issue of the *SBJT* also includes interesting essays by Francis Beckwith,⁷² Paul Copan,⁷³ and Carl Mosser⁷⁴ setting out and defending their version of classical theism. These essays essentially extend (or in Beckwith’s case defend) the ideology that was set out in *The New Mormon Challenge* in 2002.⁷⁵ They are, therefore, moments in a continuing polemic launched by some evangelicals who begin with a dogmatic “Christian” worldview—God created the world, including space and time, out of nothing. These essays may indicate that the SBC has adopted this polemic, if not the strikingly more irenic spirit of the essays published by Beckwith, Mosser, and Owen in 2002. It is, I believe, likely that Beckwith, Copan, and Mosser have found in the SBC an ally for their efforts to meet what they consider the challenge

72. Francis J. Beckwith, “Sects in the City: Mormonism and the Philosophical Perils of Being a Missionary Faith” (pp. 14–30).

73. Paul Copan, “Creation *ex Nihilo* or *ex Materia*? A Critique of the Mormon Doctrine of Creation” (pp. 32–54).

74. Carl Mosser, “Evil, Mormonism, and the Impossibility of Perfection *Ab Initio*: An Irenaean Defense” (pp. 56–68).

75. See Beckwith, Mosser, and Owen, *The New Mormon Challenge*.

posed by the faith of the Saints. If so, these essays do not provide an indication of possible shifts in the understanding of Mormon things that might have taken place within the SBC since 1998.

But the essay by Chad Brand⁷⁶ (described in the *SBJT* as teaching theology at the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and also as an associate dean of biblical and theological studies at Boyce College) provides a rather clear indication of how those affiliated with the SBC currently understand the Church of Jesus Christ. The faith of Latter-day Saints, we are assured by Brand, “seems like such a strange thing to evangelicals” (p. 4).

Mormon people, on the other hand, appear normal by contrast; in fact, as for appearance, they seem quite attractive, moral and family oriented, and committed to their faith. But it is the *faith beliefs* and *churchly practices*, not their lifestyle, of the Mormons that are so off-putting. Odd practices, such as secret temple proceedings, baptisms for the dead, sacred undergarments, and deep secrecy as to the leadership structure at the top of this oligarchical (episcopal?) organization . . . have caused orthodox Christianity generally to consider the LDS “church” a cult. (p. 4)

Brand has striven to figure out “how Mormon leaders have been able to charm to their cause people whose theological worldview is (apparently) quite different from that of the LDS,” since “evangelicals generally consider Joseph Smith, Jr., to be a charlatan, a rascal, and a sexual deviant” (p. 4). His explanation is curious; he believes that it has something to do with the decline of Calvinism (and especially belief in predestination) in America (pp. 5–6) and also with the rise of Protestant efforts to recover New Testament Christianity (p. 7). Joseph Smith is said to have attracted a following like other “populist movements” (p. 7). His “church” was part of a “village enlightenment” (p. 10) that opened the horizon for little people. And, Brand adds parenthetically, “people were also fascinated with Joseph Smith’s discovery of an ancient book” (p. 8). But, according to Brand, “the

76. Chad Owen Brand, “The Mormon Appeal, Yesterday and Today” (pp. 4–13).

Mormon appeal today” is radically different (p. 10). No longer are the Saints pictured “as polygamist, authoritarian, agrarian, and dour” (p. 10). Now, instead of appearing as gloomy dupes, the Saints appear “suburban, happy, family-oriented, and successful” (p. 10). “Since about 1990,” he claims, the faith of the Saints is “the distillation of the best of the American dream” (p. 10). This shift in the public image of Mormons has been coupled with a “new apologetic in the face of traditional Christian theology” (p. 10), which Brand associates with Hugh Nibley and others who have pounded away at, among other things, the old Augustinian tradition (pp. 10–11).

But Brand also notices efforts by a few of the Saints to identify for evangelicals common elements shared by both communities (p. 11). From his perspective, the problem is that the Saints still “argue that the Creeds of the early church got it wrong,” while evangelicals, of course, find “good reason to be guided by the decisions made in the trinitarian and christological debates” that led to the various creeds, even though “evangelicals would contend that the only source for our theology is the Bible alone” (p. 11). He grants that, “if Mormons can increasingly come back to Scripture—true Scripture, that is, and not the latter-day revelations—there is hope that one day Mormons . . . will be led to reject the unbiblical accretions of their own theology” (p. 12). What Brand calls a “dialogue” with the Saints “is important as we seek to woo intellectuals and other in the LDS faith to a more biblical model” (p. 12). It is unclear whether he has in mind efforts to woo the entire Church of Jesus Christ or merely individual Latter-day Saints.

Unlike Chad Brand, Francis J. Beckwith is familiar with some LDS literature and has actually been involved in exchanges with Latter-day Saints. Beckwith’s essay is a spirited response (pp. 14–30) to critical comments on *The New Mormon Challenge* made by David L. Paulsen.⁷⁷ While defending his involvement with attempts to meet the “challenge” posed by the Church of Jesus Christ, Beckwith is willing to “grant to Paulsen that some traditional Christians in their contacts

77. See David L. Paulsen, “A General Response to *The New Mormon Challenge*,” *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 99–111.

with Mormons have not often conducted themselves in ways that are consistent with the theological virtues articulated in Scripture. For this,” Beckwith indicates, he is genuinely “embarrassed and sorry” (p. 24). In addition, Beckwith sets out reasons for his embarrassment at *some* anti-Mormon literature (see pp. 29–30). He also describes being “appalled” by certain “behavior” from his “fellow evangelicals” (p. 29).

Beckwith acknowledges only that *some* anti-Mormon literature is reprehensible. Virtually all of it is reprehensible, including the bulk of the contributions to the summer issue of the *SBJT*. Why, I wonder, would Beckwith and Mosser, who are certainly familiar with the literature distributed by the anti-Mormon portion of the countercult, join with those whose essays manifest indifference to truth? Put another way, why is it that those who are, in Beckwith’s words, “concerned with both the acquisition of truth as well as sharing the power of Christ’s love” (p. 30) *stand together as co-belligerents* with bigoted, caustic, uninformed, and essentially countercult anti-Mormons?

Beckwith, like Mosser and Mouw and others, sees their endeavors as part of what they call an “interfaith dialogue.” However, this is actually a debate that they believe must take place with Latter-day Saints over radically conflicting worldviews.⁷⁸ Writing essays and having civil meetings with some Latter-day Saint scholars, they seem to believe, is a way of responding to “the new Mormon challenge.” The Saints must, they insist, enter into this debate. And, when defeated in this intellectual battle, the Saints must surrender. It is not, from their perspective, possible to end their campaign by the Saints demonstrating in both word and deed that we put our trust in Jesus of Nazareth as our Lord and Savior.⁷⁹ Instead, we must accept their dogmatic theology; we must be wooed or hounded into abandoning the Book of

78. For evidence of an obsession with something called a “worldview,” see Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, “Mormonism,” in *To Everyone an Answer: A Case for the Christian Worldview; Essays in Honor of Norman L. Geisler*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, William Lane Craig, and J. P. Moreland (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 324–46. For a brief commentary on this book, see the book note in the *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 356–57.

79. See Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, “Mormonism,” in *To Everyone an Answer*, 327–31.

Mormon and into adopting their version of classical theism, or the war of words must continue.

Beckwith and his associates should understand that neither the Saints nor the Brethren are about to surrender to their ideology. In addition, any genuine effort on their part to put a damper on the excesses of countercult anti-Mormonism only makes them targets of abuse. Beckwith and his associates can do nothing to put an end to countercult anti-Mormonism. Instead, they issue, in somewhat less belligerent ways, orders of submission to some version of creedal Christianity.

With Neither Truth nor Love

Contemporary conservative Protestants struggle against divisiveness. They do so in part by insisting on both the inerrancy and sufficiency of the Bible. However, this does not put a lid on contention. It may even exacerbate it. One reason is that those who interpret the canonical texts, though they advance their interpretations with much passion, are not themselves infallible. In addition, they tend to be what early Latter-day Saints called “formalists”: they reject the possibility of additional divine special revelation.⁸⁰ There need not be and can never be, from such a perspective, any additional genuinely prophetic witness or clarification. But the fact is that theological fads and fashions wax and wane. And within conservative Protestant circles there are a host of competing opinions about the proper understanding of divine things, each of which is presumably grounded in the Bible alone.⁸¹

Currently the dimming and shifting of Protestant confessional loyalties is resulting in a lessening of competition within and between Protestant denominations. Older denominational loyalties have been replaced by a continuum stretching from tiny congregations to huge megachurches often with no fixed or traditional denominational ties. This development has not, however, reduced the level of competition and contention among individuals and factions. The reason is that

80. For details, see Louis Midgley, “The First Steps,” *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): xxxviii.

81. For a description of some of the competing opinions currently found among conservative Protestants, see Midgley, “Caliban Mischief,” xxiv–xxv.

access to the religious marketplace is open to competing entrepreneurs who often operate without even a semblance of denominational oversight or control. These and other developments tend to blur or erase older loyalties and ideologies. Striking out on their own, preachers vie with each other for prominence and resources and followers. Parachurch agencies, independent ministries, and outreaches compete with each other and with older and newer denominations for a share of the religious market. Some “evangelists,” beginning with the old radio ministries, have become celebrity figures who draw support away from established churches.

For some, if no exterior enemy is in sight, aggression is turned inward and congregations disintegrate. The remedy often employed by preachers is to find ways of marshaling and directing malignant passions toward a morally blameworthy exterior agent. This option opens the door for countercult attacks on what are pictured as a demonic *other* that threatens authentic Christian faith. Often attacks are justified by appealing to some passage lifted out of context from the New Testament. We are often told that language in the Bible warrants such vicious, shameless attacks on the faith of others because, for example, Paul urged the Ephesians to speak “truth in love.” This is, of course, utter nonsense. Paul was clearly urging those who received his letter to cease being blown about by every breeze of doctrine. Instead, he advised those who follow Christ to grow up unto him and to serve him as their master by learning to speak *to each other* truth in love—something the Ephesians, like contemporary quarreling sectarians, seemed inclined not to do. They should, instead of quibbling, strive to honor the one they claim to serve by ceasing to publish, purchase, or listen to hateful rubbish.

The Powerful Passion to Destroy

As is well known, James Madison was deeply concerned about what he called the “mischiefs of faction.”⁸² Controlling these “mortal

82. On 22 November 1787, Madison wrote in a New York City newspaper under the pseudonym “Publius” what is known as the Tenth Federalist. See *The Federalist*, ed. Jacob E. Cooke (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961), 58 and 61.

diseases,”⁸³ in Madison’s estimation, is necessary to protect republican liberty and avoid civil war. What is not as well known is that, for those, like Madison, who thought deeply about the hazards to republican regimes, and who sought remedies for “this dangerous vice,”⁸⁴ the primary examples of the violence of faction flowed from “a zeal for different opinions concerning religion.”⁸⁵ One only has to reflect on the current conflicts in Lebanon, Northern Ireland, or Iraq to see what Madison was getting at. He argued that religious differences, if at all intense, may result in virulent sectarian controversy; such violent conflicts potentially threaten the liberties, lives, and properties of minorities, as well as the stability of regimes. Madison flatly rejected the excessively optimistic, naive notion that the moral sentiments of the faithful would somehow act as a restraint on sectarian animosity; he argued, instead, that conscience “is known to be inadequate in individuals: In Large numbers, little is to be expected from it. Besides, Religion itself may become a motive to persecution & oppression. —These observations,” according to Madison, “are verified by the Histories of every Country.”⁸⁶

The unhappy fact is that the American regime, which was in large measure designed to protect the rights of competing religious minorities, has not always been either willing or able to do so. Nefarious manifestations of hatred often born of religious passions are, unfortunately, common elements in the story of sectarian, adversarial zeal, even in Madison’s hopefully moderate America. We must never forget that Latter-day Saints were forced to flee from place to place and were eventually driven out of the United States into a refuge in the wilderness; they certainly did not plan on ending up in the barren desert they eventually turned into a Deseret (which is now, of course, known as Utah).

83. *The Federalist*, 57.

84. *The Federalist*, 56.

85. *The Federalist*, 58.

86. James Madison, *Notes on the Debates in the Federal Convention of 1787*, ed. Adrienna Koch (New York: Norton, 1969), 76.

The Larger Picture

Madison's opinions on the source and impact of partisan zeal and potential factional warfare might be seen as exaggerations. But if so, not by all that much. When competing faiths are involved, one can easily find numerous instances where the combination of religious zeal and political ambition has eroded or wiped away moral restraints. One of the larger though perhaps lesser known instances of this combustible mix can be seen taking place in the 1200s when the Mongol hordes that had swept west over Asia eventually reached Europe. Much as with other worldly empires, their utterly ruthless leaders seem to have thought (or at least said) that they were doing God a favor by demanding submission from everyone who stood in the way of their lusts and their illusions of potency and power. Extermination awaited those who refused their demands; all must become their vassals or suffer horrendous consequences. The famous Mongol "orders of submission" presented to their European adversaries were, of course, backed by the sword. We should not be astonished by their audacity, for they imagined themselves, like many before and since, as rightfully commissioned to subdue the world.

But those Mongol chiefs were not the only ones who embraced such illusions. The fact is that those busy guiding empires, not excepting those presumably sacral or priestly, have routinely pictured their enemies as Diabolical Monsters worthy of what they were about to endure, and themselves as Holy Knights authorized and empowered by God (or nature) to accomplish the task of subduing a supposedly demonic enemy. It turns out that, whatever it is that is behind talk of a *jihad*, it is not merely a recent Muslim aberration. Within Christendom one has only to turn to the various Crusades and Inquisitions to see something like this ideology at work.

If one is tempted to think that various efforts to weed out heretics or suppress dissent or subdue and hence enlighten the heathen (or deal with potentially powerful internal factions) reflect merely a Roman Catholic vice, one has only to remember that, if Rome burned an allegedly heretical Giordano Bruno on 17 February 1600, nearly half a century earlier (on 27 October 1553) in Geneva, with John

Calvin's approval, the Spaniard Michael Servetus was burned as a heretic. Pogroms are an old story. One reason is that Christian faith in much of Europe was once profoundly merged with political regimes. The links between bishops and kings were what eventually brought both into disrepute. Secularists pounded away at faith in God primarily because clerics and princes were seen as a single corrupt enemy. In Europe, churches still tend to be under government control and hence are beholden to state power long after those regimes have become thoroughly secular.

In addition, the links between priests or preachers and princes was crucial to the warfare that once afflicted Europe. When armies, even under a religious banner, tasted blood, it was difficult to restrain the urge to pester poor peasants or otherwise seek for glory. This eventually put all regal regimes in mortal danger. Among both Protestants and Roman Catholics the practice of tyrannicide, often backed by understandable if not commendable moral outrage, eventually turned into regicide. Now, with the decline and demise of such regimes, we tend to call this sort of thing terrorism. We also end up having to use fire to fight fire. We currently see ever larger portions of the world turned into an extension of the lamentable Arab-Israeli conflict, with all that this signifies and portends—and always with at least latent religious overtones.

An American Brand of Bigotry

Not all manifestations of bigotry and hatred flowing from religious passions, or appealing to religious sentiments for justification, have held aloft a sword or firebrand. And, of course, some of the more violent elements of sectarian animosity have been toned down. Such atrocities as lynching and cross-burning have decreased. We cannot forget that, even where a kind of "free market" for competing faiths has been given a measure of constitutional protection, flagrant religious bigotry once led to the exodus (or expulsion) of an entire people from the confines of the United States. The Saints were thus forced to travel through a hostile wilderness in an effort to find a place of refuge and thereby escape pernicious and persistent persecution.

Spoken and written acrimony from within conservative Protestant circles is often justified as “speaking the truth in love,” where it is clear that what is done is neither true nor compassionate, at least from the perspective of those on the receiving end. Churlishness in conservative Protestant circles now tends to be papered over with proof texts lifted from the Bible; the fist is thus covered in a thin veneer of rhetorical velvet. One has only to glance at the ever-growing scoria found in the slag heap of sectarian anti-Mormon literature, currently including a spate of slick anti-Mormon videos,⁸⁷ to see that this is the case.

Anti-Catholic propaganda constitutes a sizeable portion of countercult endeavors, and, for the most part, sectarian anti-Mormonism is not the work of Roman Catholics. Instead, anti-Mormonism has been primarily the province of conservative Protestants, including the pastors and preachers—often self-credentialed critics—who tend to constitute the countercult.⁸⁸ The market for the products generated by the unseemly countercult—including printed materials of various types, tapes and videos, speaking engagements in Protestant pulpits, radio and television programming, picketing and protesting, and, most recently, Web pages, boards, and blogs—fortunately is still somewhat limited by the marginalized status of the countercult within the conservative wing of American Protestantism. Competition between agencies and individuals tends to limit the number of financially successful providers. And the countercult is a business and hence must generate revenue. Countercultists vie with each other for a niche in this loathsome market.⁸⁹ In addition, the often litigious personalities

87. See the items being produced by Living Hope Ministries. See www.lhvm.org (accessed 8 September 2006).

88. For a detailed account of the countercult industry, see Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003). For Latter-day Saint commentary on Cowan’s book, see Louis Midgley, “Cowan on the Countercult,” *FARMS Review* 16/2 (2004): 395–403; and Richard Neitzel Holzapfel and David M. Whitchurch, “Assessing the Countercult,” *FARMS Review* 17/1 (2005): 311–35.

89. Secular anti-Mormonism, by contrast, tends to be financed by wealthy backers who seem willing to indulge an expensive ideological hobby. See Louis Midgley, “The Signature Books Saga,” *FARMS Review* 16/1 (2004): 361–406, for details. The one exception among sectarian anti-Mormon agencies might be what is known as the Religious

drawn into the countercult culture have regularly turned against each other. This has resulted in some ugly internecine battles among countercultists struggling to define exactly the correct religious ideology as they compete with each other for scarce resources. Fortunately the countercult is, as I have demonstrated, with one rather glaring exception, still marginal in conservative Protestant circles. And it has, to this point, had only a slight impact on scholarship.⁹⁰ Countercultists constantly complain about their lack of standing within the larger components of conservative Protestantism. This offers a ray of hope that the malignant passions that fuel anti-Mormonism, if they are not likely to disappear, will continue to be constrained to the margins of contemporary conservative Protestantism.

Of course, one can only long for the day when shame will lead the lion not to seek to feed on the lamb. I do not expect to see this soon, however.

Research Institute. Luke Wilson's operation seems tied to the resources of a wealthy patron.

90. For a brief description of some exceptions, see Midgley "On Caliban Mischief," xxiv-xxxii.