



*Site of Constantine's palace in İznik, Turkey, ancient Nicea, where the Council of Nicea took place in AD 325. (Photograph by Kent P. Jackson.)*



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## ARE CHRISTIANS CHRISTIANS?

*Some people believe that members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are not Christians. It is true that Mormonism holds some beliefs that are different from those of others who identify themselves as Christians. Do those beliefs disqualify Latter-day Saints? What are the criteria that establish Christian identity? Latter-day Saints believe in the Jesus of the New Testament and understand him to be their Savior and Redeemer. Yet they do not believe in many of the ideas formulated in the ancient councils and creeds. So are they Christians? If not, then who are the Christians?*

THE title of this chapter is deliberately vague. I am not sure myself what it means. I intend it also to be provocative. Who are the Christians referred to first in the title? Is there a default group of people who own this term or to whom it applies? Is there a universally accepted definition of who is a Christian and who is not? What about the second use of the word *Christians* in the title? Is there an official list of activities or character traits or beliefs that determine who belongs? Do the people in the first use of the word get to decide who the people in the second use of the word are? How can one join?

As members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we are often labeled non-Christians primarily, but not exclusively, by those who identify themselves as evangelical Protestants. Although we believe ourselves to be Christians, some others think we are actually something else. They have their reasons—some expressed and

some not. We, in turn, have our own reasons for calling ourselves Christians, and we have our own definitions of what that term means. But who has the authority to make a judgment regarding who are the Christians and who are not? Latter-day Saints are generally surprised the first time they hear that they aren't considered Christians. We think of ourselves as Christians; we believe in Jesus Christ, and we have always assumed that doing so makes us Christians. Is that not enough? Moreover, most Latter-day Saints assume that other Christians are just that—Christians. So why don't they assume the same about us?

People who choose to dislike Mormonism don't need good reasons to decide that we are not Christians. But in recent years, some academic and religious communities have begun to ask seriously if we are and by what means they can pass judgment on the question. Those groups have explored the issue respectfully, with rational arguments, and the results have been expressed in terms very different from those found in anti-Mormon literature. Yet the verdict is usually the same: Mormons are not Christians.<sup>1</sup> In 1995, for example, the Presbyterian Church (USA) issued a statement entitled *Relations with The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People: Position Paper*. It concluded that we are not Christians.<sup>2</sup> In May 2000, the general conference of the United Methodist Church asked the same question in a document called *Sacramental Faithfulness: Guidelines for Receiving People from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*. The document concluded that Latter-day Saint baptism is not valid because it is not a Christian baptism.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, in June 2001, the Vatican issued a pronouncement by Pope John Paul II affirming that the Roman Catholic Church does not recognize Latter-day Saint baptisms as valid. The statement was published over the signature of Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, then Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and now Pope Benedict XVI.<sup>4</sup> Other churches, either formally or informally, have drawn similar conclusions.

When we look at serious inquiries by Christian churches into the Christianity of Mormonism, we see them articulating their own foundational beliefs to define themselves as Christians before they can conclude whether *we* are. I will attempt to examine whether Latter-day Saints are Christians by looking at the question through the eyes of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and the United Methodist Church, two venerable mainline Protestant denominations. I pick these as examples because Presbyterians and Methodists normally are not associated with “countercult” crusades nor with anti-Mormon literature. These are Christian moderates with sincere questions regarding how to interface with Latter-day Saints. They deal with the matter honestly and frankly.

### *Are Mormons Presbyterians?*

The intent of the Presbyterian *Position Paper* was to examine Presbyterian and Latter-day Saint doctrine in order to deal with interactions between the two churches. The following are examples of questions and conclusions discussed in this document:<sup>5</sup>

Question: If a Latter-day Saint should decide to become a Presbyterian, is his or her LDS baptism to be considered valid for inclusion into the Presbyterian Church? Answer: No. Whereas the baptisms of most other denominations that consider themselves Christian would be considered valid, Latter-day Saint baptism is not.

Question: Shall Latter-day Saint officials be invited to administer the Lord’s Supper in a congregation of the Presbyterian Church? Answer: No.

Question: How are marriages between Presbyterians and Latter-day Saints to be considered? Answer: They are interreligious marriages.<sup>6</sup>

To assess whether Latter-day Saints are Christians, the *Position Paper* refers to the Presbyterian Church’s *Book of Confessions* and *Book of Order*, which together “set forth the basic theological framework within which the Presbyterian Church (USA) defines and understands

itself.”<sup>7</sup> By means of those sources, the *Position Paper* sets out to determine whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and its people fit within “the Church catholic or universal,”<sup>8</sup> that is, whether Mormonism has a place in the historic Christian community. The *Book of Order* states, “The confessions express the faith of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church in the recognition of the canonical Scriptures and the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds with their definitions of the mystery of the triune God and of the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ.”<sup>9</sup> Thus the *Position Paper* states that “if [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints] shares faith commitments about the canonical Scriptures, and the creedal definitions of the mystery of the triune God, and the incarnation of the eternal Word of God in Jesus Christ, it must be regarded as a sister church and its members as brothers and sisters in Christ.”<sup>10</sup> Accordingly, the document examines the Latter-day Saint faith in light of the three criteria: scripture, belief in the creeds, and belief in the Trinity.

Latter-day Saints, like Presbyterians, believe in the Bible. We probably even believe in it more than most of them do. Most Latter-day Saints read it more as evangelicals do than as Presbyterians do, but unlike evangelicals, we are not as bothered by the idea of human error or human involvement in the original manuscripts. Latter-day Saints also emphasize that the biblical books have been subject to errors and omissions (see 1 Nephi 13:23–29), justifying the revelation of new truth in modern times to make up for the absence of the fullness of truth in the Bible. Biblical conservatives find this position to be antibiblical. But more than any other factor, it is the existence of other scriptures that divides us from the rest of Christianity. We have three other books of scripture that never were part of the historic Christian canon but were revealed from God to Joseph Smith—the Book of Mormon, the Doctrine and Covenants, and the Pearl of Great Price. And beyond published scripture, we also accept additional sources of revelation. Joseph Smith said, “We

believe all that God has revealed, all that He does now reveal, and we believe that He will yet reveal many great and important things pertaining to the Kingdom of God” (Articles of Faith 1:9). We have an open canon in the sense that other writings can be added to it and in the sense that we believe in ongoing revelation to the Church through a succession of modern prophets and apostles who continue to speak God’s word.

From the point of view of the Presbyterian *Position Paper*, it would seem difficult to include Mormonism within the circle of universal Christianity, given its three additional books of scripture and belief in an open canon. The *Position Paper* draws no conclusion on this, however, deferring judgment until an examination is completed of theological issues.

The next test of the Christianity of Mormonism is whether it accepts “the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds, notably the Nicene and Apostles’ Creeds.”<sup>11</sup> On this matter, there is no question. We reject the processes that produced the creeds, the authority of those who created them, and significant portions of the doctrine they contain. We believe that because of the apostasy of the early Church of Jesus Christ, the Lord allowed the apostleship to die out, thus withdrawing from the earth the authority they had to speak and act in Christ’s name. Within a very short time, the absence of apostolic guidance caused much of Christ’s true teachings to be changed, removed, or radically reinterpreted through the influences of the prevailing culture. In the ensuing centuries, Christians debated matters of doctrine in a series of ecumenical councils presided over by bishops and civil leaders. In those meetings, they laid the doctrinal foundations of historic Christianity that are still in place today.

The First Council of Nicea, AD 325,<sup>12</sup> resulted from debates over the nature of Christ and his relationship to the Father. The controversy had caused enough concern that Constantine, the Roman emperor, called a large meeting of bishops at his palace in Nicea to settle the matter. The emperor, who only later was baptized a

Christian, presided. At issue was the question whether Jesus was of the same divinity as the Father (the position of Alexander) or of lesser divinity (the position of Arius), arguments that were founded more on Greek philosophy than on New Testament teachings. Discussions of this issue at Nicea and at later councils led to further discussions about whether Jesus was “of the same substance” as the Father or “of like substance” and the question of whether Jesus and the Father are the same being, or whether Jesus is something separate who is *like* the Father.<sup>13</sup> The Second Ecumenical Council, held at Constantinople, was convened by Emperor Theodosius I to continue the debate.<sup>14</sup> The previous year, prior to his baptism, Theodosius had issued an edict mandating a belief that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are one being for a person to be considered a Christian. This was an early attempt to define what a Christian was. In the summer of 381, Theodosius called the council and invited 150 bishops to discuss the matter. The council reaffirmed the doctrine of Nicea, putting a virtual end to rival ideas and more fully defining what is now understood as the doctrine of the Trinity—that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are three persons in one being. The proclamation of this council, the “Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed,” is what is popularly known today as “the Nicene Creed.”

But Latter-day Saints ask, Who called these people, and who authorized them to make decisions for Christianity? Who gave Alexander, Athanasius, Constantine, or Theodosius the authority to decide doctrine? Needless to say, Latter-day Saints reject what the Presbyterian document calls “the formulation and adoption of the ecumenical creeds,”<sup>15</sup> believing that those creeds were created without divine sanction. Thus by the Presbyterian definition, the Latter-day Saint faith, with its disavowal of the historical continuity of Christianity and its creeds, cannot be considered Christian. The *Position Paper* concludes accurately, “The Presbyterian Church (USA) and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints are on opposite sides of the fence in the matter of the ecumenical creeds,”<sup>16</sup> and the General Assembly stated



that while Mormonism is a “religion that expresses allegiance to Jesus Christ in terms used within the Christian tradition,” it is not “within the historic apostolic tradition of the Christian Church.”<sup>17</sup>

We plead guilty as charged. We are brothers and sisters with fellow Christians because we believe in the Jesus of the New Testament, but we are not part of the family tree that descends from the councils and creeds to produce today’s Christianity. But neither were Jesus, Peter, and Paul.

The third of the three tests in the *Position Paper* is whether the Latter-day Saint faith accepts “‘the mystery of the triune God’ . . . , as defined by the ecumenical creeds.”<sup>18</sup> We do not, but neither did the early Christians, who learned the gospel from Apostles, and neither did the writers of the New Testament, who show no evidence that they had ever heard of the ideas that were later codified as the concept of the Trinity. Indeed, the idea of three persons within one being is alien to the New Testament. No one would come up with the idea by reading the New Testament, there is no justification for it in the Bible, and scores of biblical passages can be presented to argue against it. At its core, it is not even a Christian idea but one that grows out of Greek philosophy. Taking their lead from the philosophical ideas of Plato and his successors, and not from the Bible, Christians in the early centuries determined that God, by his very nature, must be something entirely different from anything earthly. He cannot be contained in a body, a shape, a place, or a time, nor can he have anything like human characteristics or emotions. This image of God, originating from councils, creeds, and philosophers, is still accepted by most Christian churches today. Does believing in God in these terms, unknown to the writers of the Bible, determine who are the Christians and who are not?

The God described in the Bible is very different from the God defined by these councils. Jesus speaks of the Father in the third person—as a *person*—repeatedly and consistently, leaving no room for misunderstanding. The Bible describes the God of the Old and



New Testaments as clearly within the reach of human comprehension. As great and as perfect as he is, he is not a mystery but a being fully endowed with the wide range of worthy feelings and emotions that humans experience. Moreover, the Bible gives every indication that God has a body like that of a human (see Genesis 1:26–27; Exodus 33:11; Deuteronomy 4:28; Acts 7:56). Were one to read the Old and New Testaments without the teachings of the churches, one would conclude that God is a divine man. Yet today, the Latter-day Saint doctrines that some Christians find most disagreeable are those that describe him in biblical terms: he is a glorious man; he has a body; he, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit are separate beings; Christ is God's Son; we are God's children; and it is God's desire that his children progress to share in his glory.

It is safe to say that the unique Latter-day Saint view of God expressed in these ideas precludes Mormonism from being a Christian faith as defined by the *Position Paper*. The document discusses this matter in some detail: "The conclusion is inescapable that Mormon theology is tri-theistic rather than trinitarian. . . . It would be accurate to classify Mormon theology as polytheistic rather than monotheistic."<sup>19</sup> "There can be only one answer to the question of whether or not the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints shares 'the faith of the Church catholic.'" That answer is "no."<sup>20</sup> Thus Latter-day Saint baptism is not considered valid, Latter-day Saint officials may not administer the Lord's Supper in Presbyterian congregations, marriage between a Presbyterian and a Latter-day Saint is considered "interreligious," and so forth.<sup>21</sup> In short, Latter-day Saints are not Christians.

Members of the Presbyterian Church know who they are and what they believe, and they have concluded rightly that we are not them. But because we Latter-day Saints do not agree with their definition of what a Christian is, we cannot agree with their conclusion either. But at the same time we concede freely, with no disrespect toward them, that we are not Presbyterians.

*Are Mormons Methodists?*

The document *Sacramental Faithfulness*, published by the United Methodist Church, is another honest and respectful look at Mormonism. It was motivated by the same practical concerns that brought about the Presbyterian document. If a Latter-day Saint wants to join the United Methodist Church, “must that person receive Christian baptism, or does his or her baptism in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints constitute a valid Christian baptism?”<sup>22</sup> To answer the question, *Sacramental Faithfulness* examines Mormonism in light of several key theological issues, including scripture, the nature of God, the nature of Jesus, the way of salvation, and baptism.

*Sacramental Faithfulness* begins with a discussion of scriptural and doctrinal authority. It explains that, like other Protestants, Methodists accept as scripture only the Old and New Testaments. The document states that although The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints “honors these texts as authoritative, it does not uphold them as the exclusive canon of the church.” “The issue of canon is foundational,” it continues, because “church doctrine develops from the understanding and interpretation of Scripture. In the LDS tradition the three other sacred texts influence the interpretation of the Bible and therefore the formation of doctrine.”<sup>23</sup> This conclusion is both accurate and well stated. Because we believe that our Restoration scriptures come from God and represent both historical and doctrinal truth, we necessarily read the Bible through the lens they provide. *Sacramental Faithfulness* is equally forthright in identifying the lens through which Methodists and other Protestants read the Bible. “Within The United Methodist Church, church doctrine stems from Scripture as interpreted by tradition, experience, and reason, subject to the basic boundaries already established by the church’s historic and ecumenical creeds.”<sup>24</sup>

Herein lies one of the great ironies of Protestantism. The Protestant movement began with the cry *sola scriptura*, “only scripture!”—a reaction against centuries of accrued tradition and embellishment

that the Roman Catholic Church had added to New Testament teachings. Yet Protestant theologians, not much less than Catholics, read the Bible through multiple layers of interpreters—in the Methodists' case, "tradition," "experience," "reason," and the "historic and ecumenical creeds."<sup>25</sup> The document illustrates this by evaluating Mormonism not against the Bible but against postbiblical creeds and denominational pronouncements. In all, Latter-day Saint beliefs are compared to such sources over two dozen times, but never once to a passage from the Bible. Using that method, the document can prove only that Latter-day Saints are not Methodists, which it does well. But it cannot prove that we are not Christians.

In its discussion of the Latter-day Saint view of the nature of God, *Sacramental Faithfulness* cites *The Articles of Religion of The Methodist Church* to show that God is "without body or parts" and that "in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance."<sup>26</sup> Again, these ideas are incompatible with biblical teaching and confusing and counterintuitive to those who have not been trained in Nicene theology. And to me, they pale in comparison with the Latter-day Saint beliefs with which the document contrasts them: "The Father has a body of flesh and bones as tangible as man's; the Son also; but the Holy Ghost has not a body of flesh and bones, but is a personage of Spirit" (D&C 130:22). This statement resonates with readers of the New Testament because it is consistent with the biblical text and because it is clear enough to be immune from the intervention of the councils and creeds. It is also true. *Sacramental Faithfulness* quotes Joseph Smith's teaching that God "is an exalted man," and "if you were to see him today, you would see him like a man in form—like yourselves in all the person, image, and very form as a man."<sup>27</sup> Admittedly, these Restoration doctrines are "in sharp contrast to the doctrinal statements of United Methodism."<sup>28</sup>

In the discussion of Jesus, the *Articles of Religion* are quoted again to show that Jesus is "of one substance with the Father" and "took man's nature . . . so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say,

the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided.”<sup>29</sup> Other documents are cited with language like “inseparably united,” “eternally begotten,” and “of one Being with the Father.”<sup>30</sup> People untrained in historical theology understand neither the language of these ideas nor the context in which they evolved. That is because these words do not respond to the New Testament but to philosophical issues of later centuries. They represent the fruits of Nicea, Constantinople, and Chalcedon—but not the writings of evangelists and apostles.<sup>31</sup> Imagine confronting one of Paul’s converts with the notion that he isn’t really a Christian because he doesn’t subscribe to definitions that Paul had never heard of and that would not be invented until some 250 years after the last Apostle walked the earth! Early Christians of the New Testament period would not know what to make of the language used in creedal statements any better than Latter-day Saints do today. Surely such language cannot be the test by which to judge whether one is a Christian, or the original Christians themselves would be disqualified.

Latter-day Saints and United Methodists share a belief that salvation is only in Jesus Christ, “who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile his Father to us, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.”<sup>32</sup> This passage represents Latter-day Saint theology as well as it does that of the Methodists, and thus Latter-day Saints would not hesitate to identify our Methodist brothers and sisters as fellow Christians. But in *Sacramental Faithfulness*, there is little emphasis on our shared belief in salvation through Christ and much on Jesus’ origin, nature, and relationship to the Father. Because of our rejection of the idea of the Trinity, the document states that Latter-day Saint beliefs “regarding the origin of the Son and his relationship to the Father clearly call into question the nature of the unity of the Godhead as it has been understood by The United Methodist Church and the historic, apostolic Christian tradition.”<sup>33</sup> In this regard, Latter-day Saint belief “cannot be said to constitute a monotheistic theology; it more

closely resembles a tritheistic or possibly a polytheistic faith.”<sup>34</sup> In the process, “the role of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior is decidedly compromised.”<sup>35</sup>

But our doctrines do not compromise the role of Jesus as our Lord and Savior. Our knowledge that we are God’s children and that Jesus and his Father are separate beings enhances our appreciation for them and helps us to understand the reality of their saving work. Our scriptures teach that Jesus is our Lord and God and the only means of our salvation, a message that runs wide and deep through Restoration scriptures. The Book of Mormon teaches the fundamental doctrine of Christ—his atoning suffering and death, and the grace and mercy by which he saves us—better than does any other book in the world, including the Bible. “There is no flesh that can dwell in the presence of God, save it be through the merits, and mercy, and grace of the Holy Messiah” (2 Nephi 2:8). “There shall be no other name given nor any other way nor means whereby salvation can come unto the children of men, only in and through the name of Christ, the Lord Omnipotent” (Mosiah 3:17). These and many other scriptures identify the Book of Mormon as a very Christian book, and thus I would suggest that those who believe in it are Christians in every meaningful way.<sup>36</sup>

*Sacramental Faithfulness* chooses not to verbalize in clear terms whether The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is a Christian church. But it rightly points out that Mormonism “explicitly professes a distinction and separateness from the ecumenical community.” Hence, “as United Methodists we agree with their assessment that the LDS church is not a part of the historic, apostolic tradition of the Christian faith.”<sup>37</sup> As to the matter of baptizing converts from Mormonism, the document finds that our doctrine of baptism is sufficiently outside the boundaries of Christianity that it is not valid. Thus it recommends that “following a period of catechesis (a time of intensive exploration and instruction in the Christian faith), such a convert should receive the sacrament of Christian baptism.”<sup>38</sup>

*Are Mormons Christians?*

We, of all people, should not be offended that other churches consider our baptisms invalid and do not recognize the authority of our priesthood holders to officiate in their ordinances. Since the first days of our church's history, we have denied the validity of the authority and ordinances of all other churches (see D&C 22). We concede that we are not members of the historic Christian church that includes our Catholic, Orthodox, and Protestant brothers and sisters. But to consider us not Christians on issues of belief is another matter. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has no official statement to define what constitutes a Christian. We have no doctrine that would exclude anyone who believes in the Jesus of the New Testament, regardless of which church he or she attends. But we also believe that *we* are Christians, and thus we would invoke definitions different from those used by the Presbyterians and the Methodists. I often quote my son, whom I asked when he was thirteen whether he and other Latter-day Saints were Christians. He responded, "We believe in Jesus, don't we? Doesn't that make us Christians?" Definitions like this come to Latter-day Saint minds in response to the question. But this is also the definition that comes to other Christian minds as well, despite the official definitions of churches. We would not disagree with the following dictionary definitions, which stress belief and lifestyle, rather than catechism or doctrinal details: A Christian is "one who believes or professes or is assumed to believe in Jesus Christ and the truth as taught by him."<sup>39</sup> A Christian is one who "follows the precepts and example, of Christ."<sup>40</sup> And Christianity is "the religion stemming from the life, teachings, and death of Jesus Christ: the religion that believes in God as the Father almighty who as a just and merciful creator and sustainer of the universe works redemptively through the Holy Spirit for men's salvation and that affirms Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. . . : The religion that recognizes the New Testament as its book of sacred scripture."<sup>41</sup> Churches or academics may have more technical reasons for not considering Latter-day

Saints to be Christians, but because most people have simpler definitions like those quoted above, the assertion that we are not Christians is understood to mean that we do not believe in Jesus Christ, which is thoroughly untrue.<sup>42</sup> This is why we are so sensitive to this issue.

Evangelical New Testament scholar Craig L. Blomberg provides thoughtful definitions for who is a Christian. He writes, “Christian means ‘converted.’”<sup>43</sup> To be a Christian, “one must personally accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and allow him to transform every area of one’s life.”<sup>44</sup> “*Anyone* can become a Christian by sincerely trusting in the Jesus of the New Testament as personal Lord (God and Master) and Savior and by demonstrating the sincerity of that commitment by some perceivable measure of lifelong, biblical belief and behavior.”<sup>45</sup> Blomberg’s definitions are consistent with the teachings of the Book of Mormon (for example, see Mosiah 4–5; Alma 5; 7:14–16), and they are based not on creedal definitions but on Jesus’ Atonement and the process of spiritual rebirth that it makes possible. But the best thing about these definitions is that they include believing Latter-day Saints.

Latter-day Saints have spiritual experiences that bring them to Christ. As a young man, after struggling for several years to find myself and not living as I knew I should, I finally realized that God knew better than I did how I should live my life. I decided to do things his way, and thus I underwent a process that I couldn’t name at the time but that I now know to be spiritual rebirth. Paul describes well the way by which my old self became dead and my new self learned to walk “in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). I experienced “a change of heart” (Alma 5:26) “through faith on his name,” and I was “born of him” (Mosiah 5:7). Now multiply that experience by the lives of millions of other Latter-day Saints who have found Christ in reading the Book of Mormon, in the lives of good Latter-day Saint friends, in the history of the Church, in going to meetings in their wards, in taking the sacrament, in serving in Church callings, in receiving priesthood blessings, in reading scriptures with their children,



in witnessing the conversion or repentance of loved ones, in singing hymns, in attending the temple, in observing private miracles, and in saying their prayers. Real spiritual experiences—conversion, spiritual birth, and the companionship of the Holy Ghost—are a power that is everywhere to be witnessed in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

The world needed the Restoration of the gospel in modern times. We rejoice in its marvelous flood of light. We thank our Heavenly Father for it. And we testify to the world that our message is Christianity in its plainness and fullness, restored in pristine purity to bless God's children in this modern day. Joseph Smith said, "We don't ask any people to throw away any good they have got; we only ask them to come and get more."<sup>46</sup> I believe that our brothers and sisters of other faiths are Christians, in spite of the creeds and philosophies that hold them hostage. They are Christians because they believe in Jesus Christ, recognize him as the source of their salvation, and strive to live in accordance with his will. This is the definition that most Christians use, and it is the one that truly matters. I also believe that good Christians, from whatever denomination they choose, will go to a glorious heaven where they will be in the presence of their Savior. I invite all readers to investigate our message and see what we can add to the good things you already know to be true.

### Notes

1. The most serious attempt by evangelical academics to respond to Mormonism is Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002). See my response to part of this book in "Am I a Christian?," in *Review of Books* 14, no. 1–2 (2002): 131–37.
2. *Position Paper: Relations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and Its People*, and its cover document, *Relations with the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints: Overture to the 207th General Assembly (1995) of the Presbyterian Church (USA)* (Salt Lake City: The Presbytery of Utah, Presbyterian Church [USA], January 21, 1995).
3. E. Brian and Jennifer L. Hare-Diggs, *Sacramental Faithfulness: Guidelines for Receiving People from The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed.

- Gayle C. Felton (n.p.: General Board of Discipleship of The United Methodist Church, 1989).
4. "Response to a 'Dubium' on the validity of baptism conferred by 'The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,' called 'Mormons,'" (Vatican: Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, June 5, 2001); see also Gill Donovan, "Vatican Says Mormon Baptisms Are Invalid," *National Catholic Reporter*, August 10, 2001.
  5. The following discussion about the Presbyterian position on Mormonism summarizes my article "Are Mormons Christians? Presbyterians, Mormons, and the Question of Religious Definitions," *Nova Religio: The Journal of Alternative and Emergent Religions* 4, no. 1 (October 2000): 52–65.
  6. *Overture to the 207th General Assembly*, 1–3.
  7. *Position Paper*, 2.
  8. *Position Paper*, 3.
  9. *Book of Order*, G-2.0300; cited in *Position Paper*, 3.
  10. *Position Paper*, 5.
  11. *Book of Order*, G-2.0300; cited in *Position Paper*, 7.
  12. See J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1978), 223–51; W. H. C. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984), 494–501.
  13. For the creed that was produced at the First Council of Nicea, see Henry Bettenson, ed., *Documents of the Christian Church*, 2nd ed. (London: Oxford University Press, 1967), 25.
  14. See Frend, *Rise of Christianity*, 635–41.
  15. *Book of Order*, G-2.0300; cited in *Position Paper*, 7.
  16. *Position Paper*, 8.
  17. *Overture to the 207th General Assembly*, 1.
  18. *Position Paper*, 9.
  19. *Position Paper*, 13.
  20. *Position Paper*, 14.
  21. *Overture to the 207th General Assembly*, 1–3.
  22. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 3. Note that the answer is already built into the question.
  23. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 4.
  24. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 4–5.
  25. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 4–5.
  26. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 6; from *The Book of Discipline of The United Methodist Church—1996* (Nashville, TN: United Methodist Publishing House, 1996), 57.
  27. *Times and Seasons*, August 15, 1844.
  28. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 7.
  29. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 7; from *Book of Discipline*, 57.
  30. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 7–8.

31. The Council of Chalcedon in AD 451 dealt with questions regarding the human and divine natures of Jesus Christ.
32. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 7; from *Book of Discipline*, 57.
33. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 9.
34. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 9.
35. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 10.
36. Additional Book of Mormon scriptures that highlight the grace and mercy of Jesus Christ include 2 Nephi 2:6–8; 9:8; 10:24–25; 11:5; 25:23; 31:17–20; Jacob 4:7; Alma 5:48; 24:10–11; Helaman 14:13; Moroni 6:4; 10:32–33. No one can argue that the Book of Mormon is not a thoroughly Christian book.
37. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 14.
38. *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 15. “Transfer of membership is clearly not an option. . . . It is strongly recommended that prior to Christian initiation, the person seeking membership in The United Methodist Church be urged to initiate his or her formal removal from LDS membership rolls.” *Sacramental Faithfulness*, 15.
39. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary of the English Language Unabridged*, “Christian.”
40. *The Oxford English Dictionary*, 2nd ed., “Christian.”
41. *Webster’s Third New International Dictionary*, “Christianity.”
42. “Latter-day Saints hold that Christians in the broadest sense are those who base their beliefs on the teachings of Jesus and who have a personal relationship with him. Within that definition they recognize Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, Protestant, and Latter-day Saint Christians.” Roger R. Keller, “Christians and Christianity,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 271.
43. Craig L. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?,” in *New Mormon Challenge*, 328.
44. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?,” 328–29.
45. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?,” 329; emphasis in original.
46. *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2nd ed. rev. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1957), 5:259.