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### Second Edition

The characters and storyline have remained the same as in the 1994 Edition. The Second Edition, however, contains updated statistics for the LDS Church through December 31, 2010. This includes such things as the number of members, projected membership for the future, the church’s estimated wealth, missionary activity on the Internet, etc. Endnotes have also been brought up to date.

In addition, I have added a new chapter at the end that provides an overview of the LDS Church’s current evangelistic plan instituted in 2004 entitled, *Preach My Gospel*, which outlines the missionaries’ lesson material, illustrating how it differs from the 1986, *Uniform System for Teaching the Gospel* used through 2003.

*(Scroll down to read Chapter One)*

## CHAPTER ONE

# *Surprise on Campus*

*Encountering the Mormon missionaries*

“Come quick!” a student yelled, bursting through the door of the empty classroom where I was correcting papers. Startled, my chair clattered to the hardwood floor as I jumped to my feet. Racing to the door, my mind went through possible scenarios. Was it a student lying on the ground gasping for breath? Frantically I tried to recall my CPR class. *Blow! two, three, four . . .*

Dashing outside the small wood-framed bungalow where I served as teacher of the cults class at a small Texas Bible college, I suddenly stopped short. I couldn’t believe my eyes. There they were . . . two Mormon missionaries! And of all places—at a Bible college!

Like two rabbits cornered by hounds, they had been backed onto the porch of the administration building by eight zealous students eager to try out their third-year polemics. I almost felt sorry for the missionaries.

Both were in their early twenties, had short haircuts, were dressed in white shirts, ties and dark pants, and wore black plastic lapel pins that stated their last names preceded by “Elder.” Underneath their names was “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.”

Tucked beneath their arms, they carried a thick black book that resembled the Bible. Nevertheless, I recognized the *Standard Works*. Nicknamed the Four-in-One, it consisted of four major works: the King James version of the Bible, with Mormon annotations; the Book of Mormon, which claims to be the history of the ancient inhabitants of the Americas; the Doctrine and Covenants, revelations given to their church; and the Pearl of Great Price, consisting of the Book of Moses, Book of Abraham, Writings of Joseph Smith, and the Articles of Faith.

I knew why the students had sent for me. They expected me, a former Mormon, to convert the missionaries, to denounce them, or to at least send them whirling into a state of inextricable confusion.

Looking like they were fresh off the farm, the two men appeared young and inexperienced. I walked toward them, knowing I wouldn’t have the heart to be

rough on them. I knew they believed they had something precious to offer. In addition, I also knew their love for God, their zeal, their dedication—I had once stood where they stood. I had served two stake missions (stake missionaries remain at home, hold secular jobs and do missionary work evenings and on weekends). I married a returned Mormon missionary, who later died, and sent a daughter, now a Christian, on a Mormon mission.

Complying with Mark 6:7, they always went out two by two. Studying them, it was easy to spot which of the two classifications each fell into, *senior companion* or *greenie*. The one longest into his two-year mission, the senior companion, was tall and slender with reddish blonde hair—handsome in a boyish kind of way—maintaining a bold stance. The other, the greenie, as new missionaries are called, was stocky and had brown hair. Unsure of himself, he was letting his companion take the lead.

There are a variety of motives that bring young men like these two on a mission. Some go to better qualify themselves as husbands for Latter-day Saint girls back home. Many consent simply because it is expected. Others go with the sole intent of meeting lady missionaries (called LMs) as future spouses. Then there are some who, living a life contrary to Mormon standards before their mission, are forced by their parents and bishop as a last-ditch effort to straighten them out. Of course there are those who, deeply devoted and full of zeal, are genuinely anxious to bring the news of the “restored gospel” to the world.

I approached the small circle and quickly glanced to see which of my students were there. I saw Robert, the over studious son of one of our college instructors. Sure of himself because of his academic abilities, he nevertheless lacked spiritual sensitivity. Ilya, a Russian student who had fled to America as a result of the civil war in Georgia, Russia, was also there. Then there was Matt, with his blond pigtail and his interesting way of walking—like he was keeping time to the beat of some invisible rock group. There was also Sheri, the *señorita*, affectionately nicknamed Tia by the students because she had a zillion ways to fix tortillas. Tall and slender, she was a Christian of Spanish descent with snappy, black eyes that flashed with fire when she danced. She looked forward to becoming a missionary to Latin America.

It seemed that my whole class was there. While I made note of the others, I saw Tia’s roommate, Susan, tossing her long blonde hair so as to catch the sunlight. Her eye-fluttering attention was focused on the senior companion. Humorously, I passed it off. That was just Susan—she flirted with all the boys.

I was particularly interested in the facial expressions of the students. Some, never having seen a Mormon missionary before, stared at them in wonderment. Others, assuming more sober expressions, looked like they were just waiting for an

opening to witness. The remaining few, however, exhibited caution as if fearing the missionaries might bite or at least send a demon jumping out at them.

Finally within hearing range, I heard the greenie (Elder Barrett, according to his lapel pin) say, “Did you know that, just like the Bible, God has given us another book that testifies of Christ?”

“Are you talking about the Book of Mormon?” I asked, moving in closer.

“Why yes!” He turned toward me with an eager smile. The students made room for me, and the air was tense with suppressed excitement.

“I’ve read the Book of Mormon,” I began, “and since it quotes extensively from the Bible, plus has exciting adventure stories in it, I do have to admit it’s impressive.

“But,” I quickly added, looking genuinely puzzled, “the only problem I can’t seem to reconcile is the way it describes God.”

“What do you mean?” Elder Barrett asked, confident he could solve my dilemma.

“Well,” I continued, “I know the Mormon Church teaches that God is an exalted man and that there are many gods. But, why doesn’t the Book of Mormon, which your leaders say contains the ‘fullness’ of the gospel, back up your church’s teachings? If the Mormon Church was started by God, then the book you say He has revealed ought to match its doctrines.”

“Uh . . . ma’am . . . ,” started Elder Barrett, “there is, of course, no question that the Book of Mormon is in complete agreement with our church’s teachings.”

“Well, then,” I hurriedly added, “maybe I’ve missed something. I’ll tell you what. I’ll consider joining your church if you can show me in the Book of Mormon where it teaches the *Mormon God*” (I knew I was on safe ground. The Book of Mormon taught the Christian concept of only one God as spirit, which contradicted the LDS Church’s present teaching that God, one among many gods, is a glorified man).

One of the students behind me quietly gasped. Elder Barrett quickly looked to his companion whose lapel pin identified him as Elder Black. He, too, looked nervous. Evidently, they had never had this challenge put to them before. Not having a rehearsed response, they were in trouble, and they knew it. Then, Elder Black did exactly what I expected.

Pulling himself up to full height so he could say what he had to say all in one breath, he looked me squarely in the eye and in a tone of great conviction, and with emphasis on a special key word, began: “I *know*, by the power of the Holy Ghost, that the Book of Mormon is true and was restored by divine revelation to the prophet Joseph Smith . . . that Jesus is the Christ . . . President Thomas S. Monson is a prophet, seer and revelator . . . and the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is the only true church upon the face of the earth!”

There was silence for a split second. I knew most of the students had never heard a Mormon bear a testimony before. I was sure they were wondering how I could possibly combat someone's personal conviction.

"How do you know those things, Elder?" I asked.

"I know by a special feeling I have in my heart."

"Well," I quickly responded, "I too have a testimony." A blank look slipped over both their faces.

"I *know* beyond the shadow of a doubt," I began, "that Jesus is the Christ and Savior of the world . . . that He died for my sins and was resurrected. I *know* that I am saved by grace and not by works, and will inherit heaven upon that principle. I also *know* that God hears and answers prayer. I *know* all this, not only by the feeling I have from the inner witness of the Holy Ghost, but by the reliability of God's Word, the Bible, which declares it to be so. And, I also *know* that because of my relationship with Christ, Jesus has changed my life and continues to bless me!"

The elders simply stared. I already knew the questions racing through their minds: *How can an outsider include the phrase, "I know," since only someone who has received the Holy Ghost can use that phrase? How can this person, who isn't a Mormon, even have the Holy Ghost without having received it from someone holding the Melchizedek Priesthood?*

At that point, I deliberately said nothing. Hesitantly, the elders fumbled for words. "That's very nice. We, uh . . . we have another appointment and don't have time to spend right now."

In a further attempt to cover up their confusion, Elder Black suddenly forced a Cheshire-cat-like grin on his face. Courageously he said, "But, if any of you would like to know more about the Mormon Church, we can be contacted at this number." He handed his card to Susan. They turned and left, but not before I saw Elder Black give Susan a second glance.

Just then the bell rang. Saying that I would cover the situation in class, everyone scattered.

I hurried across campus, relieved that I didn't have to give CPR after all, but still felt that I had a life-or-death situation on my hands. The missionaries were personable and disarming, and I knew how impressive a verbal testimony could be—even a Mormon's. I recalled Josh McDowell saying he admired a man or woman with conviction and often felt more at home with radicals who could state with certainty what they believed than with wishy-washy Christians.<sup>1</sup> I was concerned. The students couldn't help but be affected by Elder Black's testimony.

Then there was Susan. It was obvious she was attracted to him.

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When the second bell rang, the students were already seated, eager-faced. The word had gotten around.

Glancing about, a tiny alarm went off inside me—Susan wasn't in her seat! I glanced questioningly at Tia, who sheepishly looked the other way. I dismissed my feelings. She'd be here soon.

"Today," I began, "we had a little excitement on campus." Everyone laughed. Quickly explaining what happened for the benefit of those few who hadn't heard, I then cautioned them.

"All of you have been studying cults for quite a while, and you probably think that all you have to do is say exactly what I said today, *verbatim*, and you'll stump the missionaries every time. You're foolish if you believe this. Today I was simply fortunate to converse with two missionaries who hadn't encountered a Christian bearing a testimony before. More especially, they'd never been quizzed about the contradiction between their church's present teachings on God contained in the Book of Mormon.

"In addition, you may also believe that all you have to do is quote Scripture telling them they're sinners and suddenly they're going to exclaim, 'Wow, I really see that I'm lost!' If so, you're very naive.

"While I encourage you to plant seeds if you should encounter missionaries, remember to plant only positive ones. Keep it simple and don't argue with them. You are not going to convert them—at least not while they're on their mission, because they're trained to defend Mormonism. Those who have spent as many as thirty years dealing with Mormons offer the same advice. After their mission, however, there is a chance that one may convert to Christianity, even as my daughter did.

"But, remember these cautions: *Don't* try to take on the Mormon missionaries in a theological debate until you've dealt with the average Mormon, and *don't* take on the average Mormon without a thorough understanding of Mormonism.

"I would also add that since it takes years to become well versed in the doctrines and mentality of a single cult, you will be more effective if you concentrate on just one and leave the others for someone else."

Tia raised her hand. "Today you made a faith statement to the missionaries. Christians don't usually say it the way you did, so what were you trying to do? Imitate their testimony? If so, what was there about it that apparently disarmed them?"

"Before I answer that," I replied, "let me explain what a Mormon testimony is.

"As a major rite of passage, every worthy member is supposed to acquire one. That is, a Mormon is expected to reach a point where he or she can stand up in a testimony meeting and say, 'I know my beliefs are true,' as you heard the one elder do this afternoon. They also list certain basic doctrines one by one. This rhetoric is usually declared all in one sentence to illustrate that the witness of the Holy Ghost has encompassed all beliefs as one comprehensive truth.

“Now, admittedly, members are taught from toddlerhood to memorize this testimony. Church leaders especially encourage it, knowing that the verbalization of one’s faith tends to give more meaning to beliefs. As children are growing up, they rattle it off as a conditioned response and as an incentive for acceptance and approval. If missionaries don’t have one, they are urged, as Elder Boyd K. Packer admonished, to keep stating a testimony until they get one.<sup>2</sup>

“Training Mormon children to memorize a testimony eventually produces an inner conviction that it *really* is true. When this happens, it translates into an emotional experience that becomes personally meaningful. They are told that this emotional ‘feeling’ is the Holy Ghost confirming their beliefs. Elder Black, you may also recall, said he knew his church was true because of a feeling. You may recall that in my testimony I stated that I knew my beliefs were true, not only by a feeling, but because God’s Word declared them such.

“The testimony is one of the tools missionaries carry with them. They are taught that when they are backed into a corner by Christians their personal testimony will always render non-Mormons helpless. Since the missionaries couldn’t respond to my claim that the Book of Mormon’s concept of God contradicts their church’s teachings, that’s exactly what Elder Black did.”

Robert raised his hand. “There was one thing I noticed when you were making your faith statement. You put an unusual emphasis on the words *I know*. It sounded strange. Christians don’t say that.”

“Those words, *I know*,” I replied, “comprise a key phrase that is loaded with implications for Mormons. So also is *I know beyond a shadow of a doubt*, and *I bear witness*. Incorporating one of these phrases is the only way a Christian can impress a Mormon with a faith statement. But it must be declared with conviction.”

Reaching for a book, I said, “Listen to what John L. Smith, who worked with Mormons for years, says about witnessing:

Any indication or hesitation on the part of the [Christian] witness is interpreted by the Mormon as weakness and error. He is used to seeing non-Mormons who are timid and unsure of themselves. He sees the Mormon self-assuredness as an indication of his being “right.” Therefore, the fearful, timid, flinching, fainthearted witness has already almost defeated his effort by his lack of “boldness.”<sup>3</sup>

“Remember, in the book of Acts, boldness is what impressed many who listened to Peter and Paul (See Acts 14:13; 9:29). To Mormons, a testimony stated with boldness and conviction signifies that the Holy Ghost is producing that testimony by supernatural revelation.



“Now, while they believe that God can confer a ‘temporary’ endowment of the Holy Ghost to convince a non-Mormon of the truth of Mormonism, a person can only have the *permanent* companionship of the Holy Ghost by having hands laid on him by an elder in their church.

“What caused the missionaries to fumble today was their confusion as to how I, who am not a Mormon, could possibly have the Holy Ghost when I had not received it by the laying on of hands by someone holding the Mormon priesthood. In addition, how could I have the Holy Ghost and not be moved to testify about the truth of Mormonism? To them, that is the Holy Ghost’s primary function.”

Matt raised his hand. “I noticed today, that you said Holy *Ghost* instead of Holy *Spirit*. Isn’t that term outdated?”

“Yes, it is. However, when dealing with Mormons, be sure you use it. To them, the Holy *Ghost* and Holy *Spirit* are two different entities. The Holy *Ghost* is the third member of the Godhead, a separate personage of spirit who will some day acquire a body. His job is to confirm truth. The Holy *Spirit*, on the other hand, is a spiritual substance—an intelligent energy that was in the beginning and co-eternal with God—and is the material out of which man and the world was created.<sup>4</sup>

“One last thing. You’ll recall in my testimony that I stated that I know God hears and answers my prayers. Always include that statement. It will puzzle Mormons. They believe that only Mormons, because they are members of the only church God recognizes, are privileged to have their prayers answered on a regular basis. That is, they believe that an outsider may genuinely receive an answer when praying about Mormon doctrine, but not in other matters.

“Here’s an example. When I was teaching the Gospel Doctrine class in my ward, I dared to state that Baptists could possibly have their prayers answered. The reaction was startling. Four indignant people immediately got up and marched out. The negative response from all seventy members of my class was so extreme that I thought I’d be stoned on the spot!

“However, if you do share a prayer experience with Mormons, they’ll never indicate this bias. They will make a good show, convincing you that they accept your experience. If they are impressed with it, they’ll think one of three things. One, God has already picked you and has led you to them, which explains your prayer experience; two, it is of the Devil; or three, they’ll be impressed enough about its genuineness to wonder why God gave it to you. If you tell specifics of your prayer experience rather than generalizing, it is one seed they will always remember. Coupled with other seeds, it may contribute to their questioning Mormonism in the future.”

Tia raised her hand. “You shocked quite a few of us by telling the missionaries you would join their church if they could show you where the Book of Mormon teaches the Mormon God. Would you really go back?”

“Of course not. However, I knew that I was on safe ground. When Joseph Smith first wrote the Book of Mormon, he pretty much believed in the traditional God. Listen to this,” I said, picking up a Book of Mormon. “In Alma 18:26–28 we read the following: ‘And then Ammon said: Believest thou that there is a Great Spirit? And he said, Yea, and Ammon said: This is God.’ It also teaches that Jesus is God in Mosiah 15:1-4:

And now Abinadi said unto them: I would that ye should understand that God himself shall come down among the children of men, and shall redeem his people. And because he dwelleth in flesh he shall be called the Son of God, and having subjected the flesh to the will of the Father, being the Father and the Son—The Father, because he was conceived by the power of God; and the Son, because of the flesh; thus becoming the Father and Son—And they are one God, yea the very Eternal Father of heaven and of earth.<sup>5</sup>

Further, it teaches *against* a plurality of gods in Alma 11:26-31:

Now Zeezrom said unto him: Thou sayest there is a true and living God? And Amulek said: Yea, there is a true and living God. Now, Zeezrom said: Is there more than one God? And he answered, no. Now Zeezrom said unto him again: How knowest thou these things? And he said: An angel hath made them known unto me.<sup>6</sup>

“Later, Smith’s beliefs evolved. So, today, Mormonism teaches that God is a resurrected man, Jesus is *not* God, and that there are many gods. Later, more doctrinal changes were gradually made as Joseph Smith advanced in his ideas. For example,” I said, picking up a chart, “notice the difference between the original 1830 edition and the present version of the Book of Mormon: The earlier rendition equates Jesus as God, while the later version shows Jesus and God as separate entities:

And the angel said unto me, behold the Lamb of God, yea, even the Eternal Father (1830 edition).<sup>7</sup>

And the angel said unto me: Behold the Lamb of God, yea even *the son of* the Eternal Father (1993 edition)!<sup>8</sup>

“But now, I have a surprise,” I said, glancing out the window at the tall, willowy figure hurrying up the stone walkway to the classroom. “How would you like to quiz a real live Mormon missionary?” Everyone looked stunned.

Laughing, I continued, “I asked my daughter Debra to come. I believe most of you know that she was born in the Mormon Church and later filled a Mormon mission before she became a Christian. Strangely, it was while she was on that mission that she decided she wanted nothing more to do with Mormonism. When she saw that the objective of the missionary lessons was to convert people to the church, tithing, Word of Wisdom and Joseph Smith, and that Jesus wasn’t mentioned until the sixth lesson, she became disillusioned. And, to top it off, she tells how she kept running into those ‘born again Christians’ who would say things that made her think.

“Anyway, I’ve asked her to speak to you today. However, I think I’ll just open it up to questions.”

The class looked pleased and all eyes turned to the door. Debra entered, her short brown hair slightly disheveled from the Texas humidity. I felt a mother’s pleasure at her graceful self-assuredness as she smiled contagiously at the students, then at me. More than one person had told me how lovely she was.

“Debra, we’ve had a little change in plans,” I said. “Two Mormon missionaries came on campus this morning, so I’m sure the class would like to ask you some questions. Okay?”

“Sure,” she said, smiling. Dropping the books from her arms into a corner chair, she walked to the front of the class and said, “First question?”

Five hands shot up at once. “You,” she said, pointing to Robert.

“Is there any difference,” Robert asked, “between what a female missionary does and what a male missionary does?”

“One difference” she replied, “is that females only serve eighteen months, whereas the men serve two years. However, there is nothing different in the message they preach when knocking on doors. But, there is one major difference that makes itself known when lady missionaries finally get a convert—the priesthood. Females cannot baptize or lay on hands to give the gift of the Holy Ghost. Only men.”

Robert looked puzzled. “The only time I ever heard of the priesthood,” he continued, “was in connection with the Catholic Church. Is it the same thing?”

“There is one similarity,” Debra replied. “Both churches claim priesthood authority through apostolic succession. Catholics claim that Peter established the priesthood in Rome and it was handed down from pope to pope; Mormons claim that Peter, James, and John, resurrected beings, personally appeared and restored the priesthood to Joseph Smith.”<sup>9</sup>

“To Mormons, priesthood is their one claim to fame, so to speak. It is their authority to act in the name of God. Without the priesthood, they believe no church can officially function. Nor, can one baptize. This is why they emphasize it so much. They feel this is their elite edge over a pastor or member of any Christian church. In fact,” she said, “every elder in the Mormon church can trace his priesthood lineage back to Joseph Smith, who supposedly received it from Peter, James, and John, who received it from Christ.”

“How,” Matt called out, “did Smith claim to receive the priesthood? A supernatural voice? Or, did some heavenly being appear to him? Further, I don’t believe Jesus, let alone Peter, James or John, ever laid hands to confer priesthood on anyone, did He?”

“Debra,” I interrupted, “these are a lot of questions to answer. Why don’t you take them in order by first giving a thumbnail sketch of Joseph Smith’s account of receiving the priesthood.”

“Good idea,” she replied, grabbing one of her books from the chair.

“First,” she began, “in talking about Mormon priesthood, we’re talking about *two* priesthoods—the Aaronic and the Melchizedek. Mormon elders hold both. Since the Aaronic is the first one Smith claimed to receive, I’ll start by telling you that story.

“On May 15, 1829, Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery supposedly went into the woods at Harmony, Pennsylvania, to inquire of the Lord about baptism for the remission of sins. John the Baptist, a resurrected personage, suddenly appeared to them in a cloud of light. The following is the account of John’s words to them:

Upon you my fellow servants, in the name of Messiah, I confer the Priesthood of Aaron, which holds the keys of the ministering of angels, and of the gospel or repentance and of baptism by immersion for the remission of sins; and this shall never be taken again from the earth until the sons of Levi do offer again an offering unto the Lord in righteousness.<sup>10</sup>

“After receiving this priesthood from John,” Debra continued, “Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery then baptized each other. Of course, Jesus never taught that one had to hold the Aaronic priesthood before he could baptize another believer.

“Nevertheless, what is so illogical is that Smith and Cowdery, after baptizing each other, ordained each other to the Aaronic priesthood. ‘What?’ you are probably asking. ‘Do you mean they *lost* their priesthood within the first few minutes after John the Baptist gave it to them?’” The class laughed.

“But even if their story hung together, there’s another problem. The Bible says that the Aaronic priesthood was reserved only for the descendants of Aaron.

Mormons claim to be of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, not Aaron. In view of that, they believe that until someone steps forth with a legitimate claim to being a descendant of Aaron (which they believe is supernaturally disclosed through one's patriarchal blessing), members of the priesthood can substitutionally officiate in the duties of the Aaronic priesthood. So now, even though they are not descendants of Aaron, they ordain young men and older, newly-converted men to the Aaronic priesthood.

“What is so presumptuous is that in the Bible, God was very strict about who could hold the Aaronic priesthood. Even Christ couldn't hold it because he was of the tribe of Judah.<sup>11</sup> That means that Mormon men are making themselves more privileged than Christ. That alone ought to refute the Mormon Aaronic priesthood.

“Further,” Debra said, “it's inconsistent with God's Word to continue a priesthood that was done away with. Since all the work of Old Testament priesthood offerings pointed to Jesus as the final Lamb, the Aaronic priesthood was no longer needed after His sacrifice.”

Matt spoke up. “If Mormons insist on claiming the Aaronic priesthood, then their priests really ought to offer animal sacrifices.”

“Well, brace yourself,” Debra said, grabbing another book. “Joseph Smith taught that animal sacrifice would eventually be reinstated. He says:

It is generally supposed that sacrifice was entirely done away when the Great Sacrifice [i.e.] the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus was offered up, and that there will be no necessity for the ordinance of sacrifice in [*sic*] future; but those who assert this are certainly not acquainted with the duties, privileges and authority of the Priesthood, or with the Prophets. . . . These sacrifices as well as every ordinance belonging to the Priesthood, will, when the Temple of the Lord shall be built, and the sons of Levi be purified, be fully restored and attended to in all their powers, ramifications, and blessings. . . . It is not to be understood that the law of Moses will be established again with all its rites and variety of ceremonies; this has never been spoken of by the prophets; but those things which existed prior to Moses' day, namely, sacrifice, will be continued.<sup>12</sup>

Another student spoke up. “How did Joseph Smith get the Melchizedek priesthood? Another visitation?”

“Well, sort of,” Debra laughed. “Joseph Smith didn't provide a written account of Peter, James, and John's visitation. Perhaps this is why the story had to

be invented by the church six years later. There is no mention of either the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthoods being part of the Mormon Church in the 1830 edition of the Book of Commandments, the predecessor to the Doctrine and Covenants. But later, when they decided to use these priesthoods, verses on the two priesthoods were inserted into the first edition of the 1835 Doctrine and Covenants.<sup>13</sup> Sidney Rigdon was behind this, according to David Whitmer, one of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon.<sup>14</sup>

“The reason the Melchizedek priesthood was needed was probably because leaders suddenly remembered their Bible.<sup>15</sup> They knew John the Baptist said he wasn’t able to confer the baptism of the Holy Ghost (Matthew 3:11). His authority wasn’t enough, so they had to incorporate an additional priesthood. The only one left was the Melchizedek.”

“But, I thought,” Matt interrupted, “that Jesus was the only one who held that priesthood.”

“You’re right,” Debra continued. “And that’s the one fact that destroys the Mormon claim to the Melchizedek priesthood.”

“In the Old Testament, the priesthood was passed on from one person to another so that animal sacrifices, which pointed to Christ, could be officially performed for the cleansing of sin. This had to be the process because these men died. But after Jesus fulfilled the sacrifice and now lives eternally as our permanent High Priest, there is no longer any need to pass it on, or for anyone else to be ordained to the priesthood. (Hebrews 7:24)

“All New Testament believers became priests of a sort, because they daily offered themselves as *living* sacrifices to God in service. (Romans 12:1) As Christians, we share Christ’s priesthood, but it is neither Aaronic or Melchizedek (1 Peter 2:5, 9). While we don’t offer animal sacrifices for others’ sins like Old Testament priests did, we intercede for others in prayer so they’ll turn to the one High Priest, Jesus, who can assure them of cleansing through His sacrifice.

“Another difficulty with the Mormon priesthood,” Debra continued, “is that bishops holding the Melchizedek priesthood are called high priests. But not even the high priest in the Old Testament held the Melchizedek priesthood. To make matters worse, in the Old Testament there was never more than one major high priest at a time. But Mormons have many. Further, the office of high priest was abolished after Christ became our High Priest. This is why there were no high priests in the New Testament church.”

“But,” Matt interjected, “don’t Mormons claim that Jesus gave the priesthood to His disciples?”

“That’s right. But, Jesus never conferred priesthood on anyone. However, He ordained, or appointed, individuals to do certain *tasks*.

“Mormons, in suggesting that Jesus did confer priesthood, quote the King James version of John 15:16, ‘Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you.’ But they go no further. The rest of the verse, which they ignore, says He ordained (or appointed) them to ‘go and bring forth fruit.’ It says nothing about priesthood. They say the word *ordained* means He conferred priesthood by the laying on of hands. This is *not* what that verse says.

“The problem with Mormons is that they apply the wrong meaning to the word *ordain*. It actually means ‘appoint.’ If the word *ordain* means ‘priesthood,’ then everything mentioned in the Bible that God *ordained* means He gave it priesthood. In section 89 of the Doctrine and Covenants it says: ‘all grain is ordained for the use of man and of beast.’ Marvin Cowan, in *Mormon Claims Answered*, asks: ‘Did someone lay hands on the grain and give it the Priesthood?’ He says further:

While it is true that someone can be ordained by “laying on of hands,” that is not the meaning of the word. It means to “appoint” or “point out.” D. & C. 89 also mentions that herbs and flesh of beasts and fowls are “ordained for the use of man.” That context shows that “ordained” means “appointed.”<sup>16</sup>

“Mormons get the idea that priesthood must be conferred by the laying on of hands and quote Hebrews 5:4, ‘No man taketh this honor unto himself but he that is called of God as was Aaron.’<sup>17</sup> Once again Cowan states:

Nothing is said in the Bible about “laying on of hands” or ordaining Aaron or anyone else to the priest’s office. Aaron was “anointed” (Ex. 40:13), but so was the tabernacle and everything in it (Ex. 40:9–15). Surely this “anointing” was not the “laying on of hands” to give the priesthood, or the tabernacle and everything in it were also ordained to the priesthood!<sup>18</sup>

“Here is a chart,” said Debra, placing a large poster against the blackboard. “It contains a brief summary of biblical facts about the priesthood. The contradictions between it and the Mormon concept are obvious.”

## **BIBLE**

God ended the Aaronic priesthood since it only served to point to Christ

God was strict about which tribe could hold the Aaronic priesthood. Even Jesus was denied because He was of the tribe of Judah.

Animal sacrifice was ended, since it pointed to Christ.

There was only one major High Priest in the Old Testament at a time.

Old Testament High Priests never held the Melchizedek Priesthood.

New Testament believers never had the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood conferred upon them.

Jesus, after his resurrection, held an eternal, untransmissible priesthood. It no longer had to be passed on in order to be continued

God said all believers regardless of race or gender are priests and hold royal priesthood since they sacrifice to God daily.

Jesus did not lay hands on his disciples to confer either the Aaronic or Melchizedek priesthood.

## **MORMON CHURCH**

Mormons re-instituted the Aaronic priesthood.

Mormons disregard this restriction. Alleging to be of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, they still claim this right.

Mormons anticipate the reinstatement of animal sacrifice.

Mormons have many.

Mormon High Priests hold the Melchizedek priesthood.

Mormons confer both.

Mormons insist the Melchizedek priesthood is transmissible and must be passed on to someone to perpetuate it.

Mormon priesthood is reserved only for males.

Mormons lay on hands to confer both priesthoods.



“Therefore,” Debra continued, “the Mormon claim to priesthood is in contradiction to the Bible in every respect. The inconsistencies are all the more apparent in light of the Mormon Church’s claim that it is a restoration of the New Testament church.”

Ilya raised her hand. “Mormons talk about how they have sure answers to everything. Yet, if they can’t take what God said in the Bible as absolute, I would call that a very confusing environment to live in, let alone a faith to stand firm in.”

“Only we, as Christians,” Debra responded, “are able to see that. Most Mormons, however, do not feel insecure. Their security, albeit a false security, comes from believing that God sent Joseph Smith the Aaronic priesthood by way of John the Baptist; the Melchizedek priesthood by Peter, James, and John; and that Jesus continually revealed privileged truths to Joseph Smith and all succeeding church presidents. These so-called truths supply members with answers to mysteries about heaven, creation, and life itself. No, members feel very secure. The only aspect of Mormonism that some members feel insecure about is whether they have made themselves worthy enough to inherit the highest degree in the Celestial Kingdom.”

“No wonder,” interjected Matt, “the Mormon elders looked so sure of themselves today. Do you think a Christian could ever say anything to missionaries that would make them question their beliefs?”

“I doubt it,” Debra replied. “However, this is not to say you shouldn’t plant seeds. By seeds, though, I’m not talking about a theological argument that will only repel them. I’m talking about letting the light of Jesus shine forth. You need to let a missionary see that you have something he doesn’t have. At least make him or her want what you have. It may be a joyful expression about the Lord, or perhaps sharing an answer you received to prayer. It’s these kinds of experiences they will remember.”

“Debra,” I asked, “do you know of any missionaries who ever left in the middle of their mission because they no longer believed Mormonism?”

“No,” she replied thoughtfully. “I’ve never heard of any. I suppose I came pretty close. But, I only had a couple of months left, so I decided to stay and finish it out so I wouldn’t shame the family with a dishonorable release. But whether I had left then or later, what matters is that I am now a born-again Christian, have been for twelve years!”

Everyone applauded, pressing to ask more questions.

“I have to go to another appointment, but I’ll come back again.” With a wave to me, she quickly gathered her materials and left.

With the bell due to ring, I decided to draw some feedback from the class.

“I’m sure we all enjoyed Debra’s presentation,” I said. “But, I’d like to hear what you gained from class today. Matt, why don’t you go first.”

“Well,” Matt began, “today on campus I had a real live encounter with two Mormon missionaries. That was an experience and a half! And now, for the first time, I understand what a Mormon testimony is. More importantly, I also have a testimony. I learned what I can say, and that I can combat the Mormon’s testimony by sharing mine.”

“What else?” I prodded. “Robert?”

“I thought Debra’s discussion about the Mormon priesthood was fascinating. I can see why missionaries feel they have an edge over Christians, but at the same time I see more clearly how they have absolutely no Biblical grounds for their claims.”

Tia raised her hand. “I think Debra did a good job of showing how little Mormons understand Jesus’ sacrifice—otherwise, they wouldn’t have reinstated the Aaronic priesthood. I think it takes a lot of nerve for a church to assume its members can hold the Aaronic priesthood when even Jesus couldn’t hold it. It’s also pretty arrogant to assume the Melchizedek priesthood when it was reserved only for Jesus.”

“I think,” I said smiling, “that we had a pretty good session today.” They all agreed.

The bell rang. “Tomorrow,” I said, raising my voice over the rustle of papers and notebooks, “we’ll continue the subject.”

With that, the students scrambled out the door.

Outside, the weather was hot and the humid air suffocating. Filling the air was the loud buzz of the cicadas, summer locusts that infested the trees. Students came pouring out of the buildings, and the campus came alive. Some sought out a cool place under the trees, while others gathered around the soft drink machine. Others, in spite of the heat, headed for the small cement slab that served as both basketball and volleyball court.

Although I could hardly stand the San Antonio climate, I did enjoy the Mexican flavor of the city. There was mariachi music playing everywhere, not only at public events, but blasting from the radio of nearly every car that drove by. Then, of course, there was the Alamo and the famous River Walk.

But, even with all that, I still missed my home state with its changing seasons, especially the gold and red-orange leaves in the fall. But this is where I chose to be and, overall, I was happy. I enjoyed the students and their myriads of personalities, all of which God would use in special ways. Then I thought about Susan, who had obviously skipped class.

Sitting down on a bench near the bungalow, I began looking for her. I finally spotted her seated with Tia on the small cement curb that lined the blacktopped

driveway leading in from the street. It was private talk, that much I could tell. I also surmised by Susan's face that it was something about a boy. *What's new?* I thought. But, deciding to chance it, I walked over.

"Susan—missed you in class."

"Well," she explained, "there was this really great opportunity to witness. Under the circumstances, I felt missing class would be okay."

"Oh? Tell me about it," I asked.

"After the missionaries left, I saw them go down to the 7-Eleven, so I dashed down there too. We got to talking. And do you know, I think they're really open to hearing about Jesus. Wouldn't that be something—if I won two Mormon missionaries to the Lord!"

"Oh, Susan," I exclaimed, "I wish you could have been in class today. Mormon missionaries don't convert while on their mission. I'm not saying you couldn't say something they might remember, but it will take more than a few comments from one person to bring them out. But since I doubt they'll come back on campus, you won't be seeing them again."

"But, I will," Susan exclaimed. "I told them I'd like to discuss the Bible and they made arrangements for me to meet them at their friend's house."

My heart sank. Susan didn't know what she was getting into.

"Susan, take my word for it. They are only interested in one thing and that's converting *you* to Mormonism. While they'll respond encouragingly to anything you have to say about the Bible, they will privately feel you are on a kindergarten level compared to their more advanced gospel.

"In addition, they'll use logic that will soon have you agreeing with what they say. They'll not only quote Scripture out of context, but also use other methods. Plus, their 'friend' is really a Mormon family called 'friendshippers' who will work on you after the missionaries move on. You're not ready to take all this on, Susan."

She smiled. "I'll certainly consider what you're saying," she said.

As I walked away, I knew she had no intention of giving it up. Also, I felt her so-called dedication had more to do with being smitten with Elder Black than with witnessing.

I wondered about the others in my class. While I felt Susan was the only one romantically swayed, I knew they, too, could be influenced for other reasons. If so, they certainly wouldn't admit it. Could that be why they were so captivated by the subject? I suddenly felt their salvation weighing heavily upon my shoulders.

What on earth could I present in class tomorrow that might help?