

June 9, 2009

Dear President Smith:

I am writing you to thank you for helping to facilitate a meeting with the high school missionaries from Banner Christian School (BCS) of Richmond, VA and the LDS missionaries here in Idaho Falls. Although our meeting was cancelled by Elder A I am nevertheless compelled to address some of my concerns as to *why* our meeting was cancelled. These include:

1. the reasons Elder A expressed for the cancellation—primarily based on a report from Elders B and C about a meeting with James Hallmark and myself;
2. a desire to express my point of view as to what did and did not occur at our meeting with Elders B and C;
3. the apparent irony of Elder B and C's report in the light of the precedents set by Christ, the apostles Peter and Paul, Apollos and LDS President, Joseph Fielding Smith;
4. my desire that Elders B and C seek a remission of their sins for what I believe are false accusations of me and James Hallmark;
5. my disappointment with Elder A's refusal to host the BCS missionaries and me at an LDS sacrament meeting subsequent to Elder B and C's report.

First, the original plan for the BCS meeting with Elders B and C was to have them dialog with a few of the BCS missionaries (not the entire group). Unfortunately, because of time constraints I was unable to address with the BCS group the LDS doctrines of "the Great Apostasy" and the Melchizedek priesthood authority during their training. Therefore, I wanted Elders B and C to cover these doctrines from an LDS perspective (a meeting that occurred at the home of James Hallmark) with James and have the BCS group only listen and learn. This change was expressed to the Elders upon arriving to the Hallmark's. I did not plan on participating, but did so at any rate as will be explained in the second section.

My primary concern at this point is that subsequent to our meeting, Elders B and C allegedly expressed to Elder A that we (James and I) were "Bible bashing" and "contentious." This led to Elder A cancelling the meeting you had originally helped to facilitate with the LDS and BCS missionaries because in his words he wanted no part of the BCS missionaries "attacking" the LDS missionaries. Therefore, it seems fair to assume that James Hallmark and I have been accused by Elders B and C of "Bible bashing," being "contentious" and implicitly "attacking" them.

If these are in fact their accusations it grieves me deeply given my accountability and reputation as an evangelical missionary to LDS who steadfastly professes and teaches a philosophy of "gentleness and respect" (1 Pt. 3:15 NIV) when in dialog and/or debate with LDS. To be known as an evangelical missionary who challenges LDS to think critically and rigorously is one thing; to be accused of "Bible bashing," being "contentious" and "attacking" is quite another. The ramifications temporally and spiritually are enormous, hence my dire concern for the veracity of their accusations.

Second, after explaining to Elders B and C the change in format for our meeting with the BCS group, we opened with prayer and James Hallmark asked the Elders to share the LDS doctrines of "the Great Apostasy" and "the Restoration." Elder B took the lead and without interruption spoke for approximately 30 minutes. When appropriate James made clarifying remarks to make sure he correctly understood what Elder B was teaching.

James then explained that he wanted to examine the LDS doctrines of "the Great Apostasy" and "the Restoration" in the light of three Bible passages. James covered **Romans 10:21-11:6; Matthew 16:18** and **Ephesians 3:21**. At the end of each passage James explained how (at least in his eyes) these passages were in tension with the LDS doctrines covered by Elder B. At each juncture James was interrupted by Elder C in particular—a behavior that all of the BCS missionaries later indicated. Elder C was allowed to share his multiple discourses from the OT without interruption. Also at each juncture when James was ready to move on, despite the Elders' unwillingness or inability to acknowledge (not acquiesce to) James' point of view, I attempted to make James' position more clear by putting these passages in a broader scriptural context and by using analogies and illustrations—both techniques of which are routinely used by LDS missionaries and which I heartily encourage. I believe it was at these

junctures in particular that Elders B and C began to feel uneasy. But this begs the question: Was it because I was “Bible bashing” being “contentious” and “attacking” them or was it because their beliefs were being challenged in the light of biblical Scripture and reason? James and I, as well as the rest of the BCS group, believe it was the latter.

Third, given that I at no time raised my voice, used a rude tone, or personally insulted the Elders or the LDS Church, but rather answered *their* objections and further clarified my understanding of the aforementioned biblical passages, I am dumbfounded by their accusations.

Moreover, Jesus Himself “debated” with the Sadducees and gave them “a good answer” (Mk 12:28 NIV); the apostle Peter commanded Christians to “give an answer to everyone for the hope that [we] have” (1 Pt. 3:15 NIV); the apostle Paul “reasoned” with the Jews in the synagogues (Acts 17:2-3 NIV); and Apollos “vigorously refuted the Jews in public debate” (Acts 18:28 NIV). I submit to you that my behaviors were in line with the precedent established by these biblical figures of authority and at no time did I overstep these boundaries for which the BCS group will readily vouch.

Finally, tenth LDS Prophet and President, Joseph Fielding Smith, writes in his *Doctrines of Salvation*, 1975, 1:188:

If Joseph Smith was a deceiver, who wilfully [*sic*] attempted to mislead the people, then he should be exposed; his claims should be refuted, and his doctrines shown to be false, for the doctrines of an imposter cannot be made to harmonize in all particulars with divine truth. If his claims and declarations were built upon fraud and deceit, there would appear many errors and contradictions, which would be easy to detect. The doctrines of false teachers will not stand the test when tried by the accepted standards of measurement, the scriptures.

Here again in light of President Smith’s invitation and that of which I was accused by Elders B and C, I find the irony to be palpable if not shameful. I am deeply troubled. (It may be of interest at this point to note that when Elders B and C indicated it was getting close to their curfew we respectfully ended in prayer and I asked for the Spirit’s protection over them.)

Fourth, *if* Elder A accurately reported the accusations of Elders B and C that I was “Bible bashing,” being “contentious” and “attacking” them (or some facsimile thereof), then I believe I have been falsely accused—they have in fact sinned against me. My understanding of the LDS doctrine of repentance

requires, then, that in order for Elders B and C to “retain a remission of [their] sins” (Mosiah 4:12)—i.e. to have the stain of this sin removed so as to remain worthy to inherit a celestial glory—they MUST follow the six steps of repentance outlined in *Gospel Principles*, 1995, pages 124-125, published by The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. As such they “must admit ... [they] have sinned”; they “must feel sincere sorrow for what [they] have done”; they “must confess” their sins; they “must make right any wrong [they] have done” (which in this case would require apologizing to me personally and seeking my forgiveness and doing the same with James Hallmark, the two BCS chaperones, Dr. and Mrs. Gautier, and the six BCS missionaries, all of whom were in attendance and negatively affected by their accusations), and they must “forsake” the sin (D&C 58:43), that is, they must NEVER repeat the sin.

LDS doctrine further clarifies that should they EVER repeat this sin it proves their repentance *false or incomplete* and renders them unclean and unforgiven of both the former and latter sins (see D&C 82:7 and Spencer W. Kimball’s *Faith Precedes the Miracle*, 1977 p. 181 and *The Miracle of Forgiveness*, 1965, p. 163).

Fifth and finally, Dr. and Mrs. Gautier, the BCS missionaries, and I were especially hurt and disappointed when Elder A informed me that he would NOT accompany us to the LDS sacrament meeting we had all planned on attending together and this because of the accusations by Elders B and C. Granted, this may have been a decision handed down to him by a person or persons in authority over him. Nevertheless, given everything that I have written above this gesture (at least in our eyes) represented the epitome of rudeness and insult.

After reflecting on all of these unfortunate circumstances I have come to the following conclusion. It would have been reasonable and totally acceptable had Elders B and C reported that James Hallmark and I were more rigorous in our biblical testing of the LDS doctrines of “the Great Apostasy” and “the Restoration” than they were comfortable with and NOT that we were “Bible bashing,” being “contentious” and “attacking” them and the LDS Church. Cancelling the Saturday evening meeting with Elder A and his companions and the BCS missionaries would have been similarly reasonable and acceptable on the same basis.

Had Elders B and C taken responsibility for perhaps their own insecurities and sensitivities instead of projecting them onto and blaming James Hallmark and me for them, I would not be writing you this letter of concern. I hope we can agree that a letter of appreciation on behalf of the BCS missionaries and me for an enlightening experience both with Elders B and C and at an LDS sacrament meeting would have been a much more desirable outcome.

LDS and Evangelicals must strive to live with and love one another despite our doctrinal disagreements if for no other reason than to overcome the immorality and injustice that pervades our great country.

Sincerely,

Mike Ghiglia  
Founder and Director, Share the Son Ministries