

What is FAIR, and Why Are You Apologizing?

When people first encounter the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research, or FAIR, the first question they often ask is: “Why are you apologizing for being a member of the Church?” To aid in answering this question a formal definition is in order:

Apologetics: (n. used with a sing. verb) 1. The branch of theology that is concerned with defending or proving the truth of the Christian doctrines. 2. Formal argumentation in defense of some thing, such as a position or system.

As can be seen from this definition, far from apologizing for the Church, LDS apologists are seeking to defend the Church, as is clearly expressed in the FAIR mission statement:

FAIR is dedicated to standing as a witness of Christ and His Restored Church. Our mission is to address the charges leveled at the doctrines, practices and leaders of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Mormons) with documented responses that are written in an easily understandable style. FAIR will use current scholarship, scripture, Church doctrine, historical literature and sound logic in constructing solid answers.

Or, if you prefer a sound bite, a FAIR apologist can be defined as a “defender of the faith.”

A second question that is often asked is: “Why doesn’t the leadership of the Church address the attacks made by the critics?” This was answered in the *Church News*, 18 December 1983, p. 2:

Today, as in President Young’s day, General Authorities usually do not comment on negative information about the Church. Their responsibility is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. Their primary work is to “bear testimony of the restoration of the gospel and that Jesus is the Christ.”

Additionally, when members listen to the General Authorities, they want to hear a message that is uplifting, and one that tends to build up their faith. Most charges leveled by critics are meant to do nothing but tear down; there is little of honest truth seeking in them.

This usually brings up a third question: “If the General Authorities do not generally answer the critics, then why has FAIR taken upon itself the mission of doing so?” One reason is because, as observed by Elder Neal A. Maxwell, critics and enemies of the Church should not be permitted to make “uncontested slam dunks” (*Ensign*, January 1995, p. 60).

Because the leaders of the Church rightfully spend their time in fulfilling its threefold mission, this does not mean they discourage gospel scholarship or a search for truth. In the words of Gordon B. Hinckley, “Fundamental to our theology is belief in individual freedom of inquiry, thought, and expression. Constructive discus-

sion is a privilege of every Latter-day Saint.” (*Ensign*, September 1985, p. 6).

That is the point where FAIR comes in. FAIR was formed in late 1997 by a group of LDS apologists who frequented the America Online message boards. In defending the Church against detractors there, this small group realized they had no way of sharing their information with each other, much less the rest of the Church. As a result, FAIR was born. Incorporated as a non-profit organization in November 1997, the fledgling organization put up its first Web site in March 1998.

FAIR is staffed completely by students of the scriptures, ancient languages, early Christian history, early LDS history, and LDS doctrine and apologetics. Most all of the staff at FAIR have been involved in online services and Internet-based LDS apologetics for many years. Many of FAIR’s members are authors of currently available apologetic publications.

Through its Web site, FAIR provides resources for those engaged in gospel scholarship or those searching for the truth about a wide range of gospel topics. Among the resources offered on the Web site are message boards where most anyone can post their comments and questions about almost any gospel topic. About the only prohibited topic is the actual temple ceremony. There is a bookshelf where papers answering gospel questions and challenges are posted. There is a bookstore, where many books dealing with gospel topics are available, some authored by members of FAIR. The Web site also has a search feature that searches by keyword.

One of the most exciting and useful resources available on the Web site is the Topical Guide. When you click on the link to the Topical Guide you are presented with a list of topics ranging from Adam to Zion. By selecting the topic you are interested in, you discover a list of articles about that subject from all over the Web.

An off-line resource FAIR offers is the annual FAIR Conference. At the conference there is an opportunity to hear presentations from scholars on various topics. Also, you get to meet some of the scholars who provide the papers that provide the answers to the questions you may have.

We invite all who are interested to come and check out the FAIR Web site at www.fairlds.org.

If you would like more information on this and other LDS topics, contact the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) at www.fairlds.org, e-mail us at questions@fairlds.org, or write to us:



FAIR
PO Box 2144
Mesa, AZ 85214

This article was written in 2002 by Gary Bowler for FAIR. Copyright © 2002–2004 by FAIR. All Rights Reserved.