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La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon

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Abstract Review of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (1993), edited by Brent Lee Metcalfe.

Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*.

La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon

Reviewed by John Gee

> O ye Twelve and all saints, profit by this important Key that in all your trials troubles &, temptations, afflictions bonds imprisonments & death See to it that you do not betray heaven, that you do not betray Jesus Christ, that you do not betray your Brethren, & that you do not betray the revelations of God whether in the bible, Book of Mormon, or Doctrine & Covenants, or any of the word of God. Yea in all your kicking, & floundering see to it that you do not this thing lest innocent blood be found upon your skirts & you go down to hell. We may ever know by this sign that there is danger of our being led to a fall & apostasy.
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> —Joseph Smith, 2 July 1839[1]

> "Beware of all disaffected Characters for they come not to build up but to destroy & scatter abroad."
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> —Joseph Smith, 4 September 1837[2]

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1 Wilford Woodruff Journal, 2 July 1839 in *WJS*, 7–8 = *HC*, 3:385 = *TPJS*, 156–57. Also given in Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff's Journal*, 10 vols. (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 1:344. In citing modern editions from Joseph Smith's writings, the following conventions have been used: "=" is used when the same passage has been printed in more than one source. "≈" is used when the source after the sign is dependent upon the source before the sign. The following abbreviations are used:*PJS* for Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 2 vols. to date (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989–); *PWJS* for Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984). *WJS* for Andrew F. Ehat and Lyndon W. Cook, *The Words of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Religious Studies Center, 1980).

2 *PJS* 2:220 ≈ *HC* 2:511.

For years, Brent Metcalfe has been promising a collection of essays that would shed new light on the Book of Mormon and expose it for what he thinks it really is. The volume was promised to have been a state-of-the-art work that would set new standards of methodological rigor in Book of Mormon scholarship. Sad to say, this promised flood of light, now published, is no floodlight. It seems to be more of a candle—a Roman candle, a mere flash-in-the-pan, and something of a dud at that. If those critics who wish to view the Book of Mormon as some sort of nineteenth-century fiction were hoping to find some heavy artillery in this collection with which to besiege the regnant view of the Book of Mormon as an ancient book, they will be disappointed to find a mere hodge-podge of soggy fireworks, since this volume is filled with (1) deceptive and specious claims, (2) questionable assumptions, (3) shoddy methodology, and (4) distorted facts. The following will show a number of these in the contributions of Anthony Hutchinson, Mark Thomas, Brent Metcalfe, Stan Larson, and Edward Ashment.

Judging the Book by Its Cover

The "recurrent and oft-remarked pattern of misleading packaging" by Signature Books has been noted before.[3] Therefore, we should note precisely what is deceptive about the packaging of this book.

First, the title, *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*—a subtle changing of the title of one of Hugh Nibley's essays, "New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study"[4]—claims that the

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3 On the line of deceptively packaged materials from Signature Books, see Louis Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain and the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 305–11; Stephen E. Robinson, review of Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 312–18; Daniel C. Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): xxxiii–xxxviii, xlviii–liv. The quote is from Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxxv. It should be noted that Brent Lee Metcalfe's latest essay, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue* 26/3 (Fall 1993): 153–84, is also dubiously titled since the so-called "critical" assumptions are never critically examined.

4 The deceptiveness of the titles has already been discussed in Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxxviii. The work by Nibley may be found in *CWHN* 8:54–126.

approaches are "new." But much of it is the same material that critics have been peddling for years.[5]

Second, if we judge this book by its dust cover, we might be struck by the citations of three deceased General Authorities (specifically labelled by their ecclesiastical offices) on the back of the dust-jacket where plaudits are usually found. This seems to imply that these General Authorities would vigorously approve of what Metcalfe and company are doing. My guess is that, were they in the mortal sphere, they would not. I also suspect this is why dead prophets and long-forgotten quotes are used;[6] after all, the First Presidency has recently and explicitly discouraged those who would "obscure evidence of [the Book of Mormon's] ancient origin."[7] Also depicted on the cover, the fragment of the Printer's Manuscript with part of 1 Nephi 12:16–22, the early cut of the hill Cumorah, the engraving of Joseph Smith, the mysterious characters in Frederick G. Williams's handwriting, and the camouflaging of the subtitle all obscure the use of the word "critical" in the subtitle—not used in the sense of "discerning" but of "hostile."[8]

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5 For example, Metcalfe depends heavily on Jerald and Sandra Tanner's "so-called 'black hole' " (p. 433 n. 49). For problems with this viewpoint see reviews by Ara Norwood, Matt Roper, and John Tvedtnes in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 3 (1991): 158–230.

6 Signature Books has developed a habit of posthumously conscripting General Authorities of the past to promote its causes. Examples include B. H. Roberts, who was inducted into D. Michael Quinn, ed., *The New Mormon History: Revisionist Essays on the Past* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 303–5; and John A. Widtsoe, impressed into service by Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 265–67. The practice was noted in Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxxix, and Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain," 302–3 n. 66.

7 First Presidency Letter, printed as "Modern-language Editions of the Book of Mormon Discouraged," in *Ensign* 23/4 (April 1993): 74. Other representative warnings against this approach may be found in Gordon B. Hinckley, "Be Not Deceived," *Ensign* 13/11 (November 1983): 46; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Questions and Answers," *Ensign* 15/11 (November 1985): 52; Dean L. Larsen, " 'By Their Fruits Ye Shall Know Them,' " *Ensign* 15/11 (November 1985): 66–68; Boyd K. Packer, " 'The Things of My Soul,' " *Ensign* 16/5 (May 1986): 59–61; Glenn L. Pace, "Follow the Prophet," *Ensign* 19/5 (May 1989): 25–27; Dallin H. Oaks, "Alternate Voices," *Ensign* 19/5 (May 1989): 27–30; Russell M. Nelson, "The Canker of Contention," *Ensign* 19/5 (May 1989): 70; Glenn L. Pace, *Spiritual Plateaus* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1991), 28–44.

8 The distinction was carefully drawn in Daniel C. Peterson, "Introduction," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): viii; it

The list of contributors also presents a distorted picture. Thus we are often told that such and such a person was "former coordinator" of this or "has been a part-time faculty member" at that institution or "holds degrees" from such-and-such an institution (pp. 445–46), while leaving out what they are doing now, why the Church no longer employs them (some of them were fired),[9] or exactly what the degrees are. Why not tell us that Edward Ashment is actually an insurance salesman and that Mark Thomas is a banker? (Are these not honorable professions? Does someone imagine that intelligent people are only in academia?) The forthrightness of this section leaves something to be desired.

A Question of *A Priori* Assumptions

As anyone who has studied geometry since Nikolas Lobatchewsky knows, the entire shape of your geometrical system depends on your assumptions.[10] So, too, with Book of Mormon scholarship: the shape of the resultant system depends upon the assumptions brought to bear on the text. If in geometry you change one axiom, the entire system changes. Granted that a change in the parallel postulate will leave at least the first twenty theorems of Euclid unchanged, in the long run things will not work the same. Likewise, little discernible difference may appear on a small scale: "For any everyday purpose (measurements of distances, etc.), the differences between the geometries of Euclid and Lobatchewsky are too small to count,"[11] but on the large scale and in the big picture the geometries are clearly not the same. Thus, while Euclidean geometry

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has also been used by David P. Wright, "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *Sunstone* (September 1992): 29; and by Metcalfe in the work under review (p. ix).

9 See for example, Richard E. Turley, *Victims: The LDS Church and the Mark Hofmann Case* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1992), 84; Linda Sillitoe and Allen Roberts, *Salamander: The Story of the Mormon Forgery Murders* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988), 24, 36, 272, 286.

10 There are many non-Euclidean geometries, including Lobatchewskian, Riemannian, and taxi-cab (my personal favorite), but before Lobatchewsky there was only Euclidean.

11 Eric T. Bell, *Men of Mathematics* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1937), 306.

will work well if you wish to build an addition onto your house or map your hometown, it will get you into trouble should you wish to map the entire earth.

The equivalent of the parallel postulate in Book of Mormon studies is the question, "Did the events discussed in the Book of Mormon truly occur?"[12] Ultimately, acceptance of the truthfulness of the Book of Mormon is a question of faith, but it is also a question of belonging to the faith;[13] one of the distinctive characteristics of Mormons is that "we believe . . . the Book of Mormon to be the word of God" (Article of Faith 8). If this all took place on the Platonic plane or in Never-Never Land, then Book of Mormon studies would be quaint matters of academic interest. However, since these two ways of looking at things propose to describe reality on the large scale, various scholars have proposed tests to determine which of the two is a better fit. This is often difficult to do, particularly since secular humanism has taken over most of the education in the United States and abroad in the industrialized world—disposing most people against faith.[14] Thus, the goal of an institution like the

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12 The question is normally phrased as "if these things are not true" (Moroni 10:3). In the scriptures and in general usage of the Church, the term "true" usually means that the events really, literally and actually happened. David Wright redefines a "true" record as a record "of the inner experience of [a] great-souled [person] wrestling with the crises of [his] fate" (p. 213, brackets in the original). In this sense one could argue that Joe McGuiness's biography of Edward Kennedy is true, but I doubt that the senator's supporters would find such assertions either convincing or consoling. Brent Metcalfe also argues for an aberrant definition of "true" without revealing what his definition is (see Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 154). For other discussions of this habit of redefinition, see Robinson, review of Vogel, 314–16; Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," lvii–lxiv. For the record, the definitions listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the adjective "true" used of things (such as books) or events in the time of Joseph Smith are 2. "honest, honourable, upright, virtuous, trustworthy (*arch.*); free from deceit, sincere, truthful;" 3. "consistent with fact; agreeing with the reality; representing the thing as it is." 4f. "conformable to reality."

13 The issue is taken up by William J. Hamblin, "The Final Step," *Sunstone* 16/5 (July 1993): 11–12; and denied in the response by David P. Wright, "The Continuing Journey," *Sunstone* 16/5 (July 1993): 12–14. Wright seems to have misunderstood both Hamblin's argument and John Sorenson's work.

14 While I disagree with much of his politics and theology and some of his reasoning, Stephen L. Carter's book, *The Culture of Disbelief: How American Law and Politics Trivialize Religious Devotion* (New York: Basic Books, 1993) seems to me on the mark in diagnosing the public attack on

Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies is "not to *prove* to the world that the Book of Mormon is true. Such an outcome is probably impossible, and almost certainly inconsistent with the noncoercive plan of salvation adopted before this world was. Rather, we need simply show that there is room for faith, that belief is not something which honest and rational human beings must sadly forego."[15] For over forty years, Hugh Nibley and, later, many of the individuals associated with F.A.R.M.S. have been engaged in this sort of project, generating a large bibliography and much material.[16] But the secular humanists would like to change the approach to the Book of Mormon to one more congenial to themselves. In order to be taken seriously, the replacement of the paradigm of the Book of Mormon as an ancient book with the paradigm of the Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century fiction must deal with the large outpouring of scholarly material that has accumulated over the past forty years or so. This task Brent Metcalfe and his fellow Signaturi undertake as they now offer to apply to the Book of Mormon their assumptions—assumptions which do not coincide with those of most believing Latter-day Saints.

Examples of these assumptions are manifold, but a few may prove illustrative. Anthony Hutchinson views "the Book of Mormon as a fictional work of nineteenth-century scripture" (p. 17), which means for him that it is "a work of scripture inspired by God in the same way that the Bible is inspired" (p. 1). (This speaks volumes about his view of the Bible.) Mark Thomas assumes that the Book of Mormon must be understood "in the historical and literary context in which it emerged. . . . The historical setting . . . is the original 1830 audience" (p. 53). And therefore he also assumes that the Book of Mormon "indicates" what "Joseph Smith believed" (p. 61 n. 4), but it "is clearly not

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religion. For the attack on religion by the popular culture, see Michael Medved, *Hollywood vs. America: Popular Culture and the War on Traditional Values* (New York: Harper Collins, 1992), 37–91. For a recent attempt to downplay the media role in attacks on religion, see Jeffery L. Sheler, "A Clash of Cultures," *U.S. News and World Report* 115/11 (20 September 1993): 70–71.

15 Daniel C. Peterson, "Introduction," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): vii.

16 The bibliography is acknowledged in David P. Wright's article (pp. 165–66 n. 2) but superficially dismissed.

a restoration of ancient words in any literal sense" (p. 77). David Wright thinks that "Alma 12–13 were written by Joseph Smith. It goes without saying that . . . the rest of the Book of Mormon was composed by him" (p. 207; cf. p. 166). In fact, Wright maintains that "Smith's other 'ancient' compositions are not actually ancient" (p. 207).

The authors seem to assume that these presuppositions will not significantly affect their conclusions. David Wright admits that "presuppositions have a lot to do with conclusions, but there is much more to the thinking and evaluation experience. . . . To say that conclusions follow simply from presuppositions tends to distract attention from the historical evidence that must be considered."[17] Wright does his share of ignoring historical evidence, but he does not seem to admit how much his presuppositions shape his conclusions. One of Wright's basic assumptions is that "major textual, ideational, and cultural anachronisms . . . are found in the Book of Mormon. Anachronism, particularly of the textual sort . . . is the main criterion in determining dates" (pp. 165–66 n. 2). Yet, if the existence of prophets who can actually see into the future is a real possibility, then the prophecies they give will appear as anachronisms. By using anachronism as his main criterion,[18] Wright has begged the question of prophecy (as "fore"-telling) by disallowing the possibility of Book of Mormon prophets or of Joseph Smith foretelling the future from the outset (*a priori*), as surely as a Euclidian geometer has from the outset disallowed the possibility of a triangle whose interior angles measure greater than 180°.[19]

A Common Bond

Apart from their assumptions, the contributors also share another common bond in their willingness to lend their names and their work to Brent Metcalfe, a man whom Jan Shipps has described as "clearly intoxicated . . . with the idea that he pos-

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17 Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13–14.

18 Anachronisms may be used to date a text only when the text is assumed to be not prophetic. I will use an anachronism later to show that the invalidity of an analysis that assumes that Joseph Smith was not a prophet.

19 William Hamblin raises this issue in "The Final Step," 11–12, but Wright never addresses it in his response, "The Continuing Journey," 12–14.

sessed knowledge that would alter the world's understanding of the beginnings of Mormonism."[20] The nature of this supposed knowledge is apparent when the editor hints at "the possibility that [the Book of Mormon] may be something other than literal history" (p. x)—in other words, that it might be something other than true. Elsewhere Metcalfe has been more explicit: "I see no reason to posit a coauthor—ancient, divine, or otherwise—to explain the existence of the BoMor.[21] I view Joseph Smith as the sole author."[22] The assumption throughout most of the volume is that the Book of Mormon is not historically true, that the events in it never took place, that Joseph Smith made up the text rather than translated it. Yet this is precisely the way the world presently views the Book of Mormon. Metcalfe and company are not so much interested in changing the world's point of view

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20 Jan Shipps, quoted in Turley, *Victims*, 93, ellipses in Turley.

21 This is the bizarre abbreviation with which Metcalfe desires to designate the Book of Mormon. The book under review is filled with many of these often nonsensical abbreviations. Metcalfe, being "without the apprenticeship that graduate training provides" (Jan Shipps, quoted in Turley, *Victims*, 93), does not seem to have learned that one does not simply invent new abbreviations at whim, especially when there is an established pattern for citation. Some of Metcalfe's referencing is used purely for polemical purposes. Thus, Metcalfe wishes to refer to the Joseph Smith Revision instead of the Joseph Smith Translation or the Inspired Version so that he can depict the resulting work as neither inspired nor a translation. (For the numerous previous designations of the Joseph Smith Translation, see Robert J. Matthews, *"A Plainer Translation": Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1985), 12–13.) Metcalfe then refers to the Joseph Smith Translation as JSR even though one would normally expect this abbreviation to refer to the *Journal for the Study of Religion*. Metcalfe also uses this abbreviation in his article, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," *Dialogue* 26/3 (Fall 1993): 179–83. Normally the editorial staff of the periodical dictates the abbreviation style of the citations. Is the use of these abbreviations a slip on the part of the editors of *Dialogue* or does the adoption of a polemical notation signify a shift in editorial policy? The antagonistic quality of a significant number of recent articles might indicate the latter alternative. The publication of Metcalfe's article seems to undermine recent efforts to argue that *Dialogue* is engaged in "responsible scholarship," but perhaps the presence of Signature Book's Gary James Bergera as Associate Editor, and of Mark D. Thomas (who contributed to the book here reviewed) as Scriptural Studies Editor, as well as of fellow contributors Melodie Moench Charles and David P. Wright on the editorial board might have something to do with the appearance of this article.

22 Brent Metcalfe, open letter to MORM-ANT list-server, 16 August 1993.

on the Book of Mormon as they are in making Latter-day Saints adopt the world's point of view. The authors claim their point of view opens "fresh intellectual and spiritual vistas" (p. ix), but it is not necessarily clear from the book what the exact nature of these spiritual vistas is. (Intellectually the view is actually more constricted since it gives us at least four fewer civilizations about which to learn.)

A Guide for the Perplexed

The best introduction to the volume and the consequences of its views, however, is not in the volume itself, but in an article published by one of the contributors just before the book came out. In this article, David Wright discusses the process of changing his "historical assumptions" as a "conversion experience."[23] Wright "grew up a traditional Mormon" but "during [his] undergraduate and graduate educations" he converted to what he has called "historical criticism."[24] Though he once desired "to contribute to the 'defense of the faith' along traditionalist lines," he has now decided to engage in what he calls

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23 David P. Wright, "Historical Criticism: A Necessary Element in the Search for Religious Truth," *Sunstone* (September 1992): 28. Edwin Firmage Jr. also describes the process through which "within just six months I no longer believed the Book of Mormon to be an ancient text" as "fundamentally a conversion"; Edwin Firmage, Jr., "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon: A Personal Encounter," *Sunstone* 16/5 (July 1993): 58. Michael Rayback ("The Wright Direction," *Sunstone* 16/5 [July 1993]: 8) also describes his "conversion to the historical-critical orientation," asserting that "it is a mistake" that "the traditionalist view should prevail in the Church." This "conversion marked by the acceptance of the historical-critical method" is expected by professors at many graduate schools, who believe "that after only two weeks in the program, all of our doctoral students would assent" to its assumptions and methods; see Jon D. Levenson, "The Bible: Unexamined Commitments of Criticism," *First Things* 30 (February 1993): 24–25. The positivistic heritage of the historical-critical method permeates most scholarly work in Near Eastern studies; Piotr Michalowski has noted "the positivistic heritage of Assyriology" ("History as Charter," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103/1 [1983]: 237). Not all Mormon graduate students in the Near Eastern Studies program at the University of California at Berkeley have "converted"; while Wright and Firmage may have "converted," Stephen Ricks and I have not.

24 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 28. I am doing my best to convey fairly and accurately Wright's account of his conversion experience. My apologies if I have failed.

"post-critical apologetics."[25] He outlines the process by which this is to be done: "The critical mode has to force itself on a traditionalist by showing that it makes better sense of evidence than the traditionalist approach in several key matters."[26] This volume is a tool with which the authors seek to force their critical mode on the traditionalists, thus becoming a missionary tract of sorts.

Wright realizes the impact of his work as a missionary tract. He therefore insists that his work "cannot serve as a reason to move to some other religious tradition, especially conservative Christianity."[27] Rather, he desires that "the critical mode . . . operate within a larger conserving and community-supporting context,"[28] even going so far as to wish for official support of his mode of faith.[29] He acknowledges that some believers have been skittish about adopting such modes in the past because the

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25 Ibid. Note that Edwin Firmage's initial "ambition was to become another Hugh Nibley" though he now has "a very different scholarly outlook"; Firmage, "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 58.

26 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 29.

27 Ibid., 38 n. 62; cf. the work under review here p. 212 n. 105. I would concur with Wright's assessment. If one rejects the historicity or truth of the Book of Mormon through these sorts of naturalistic or positivistic approaches, one must also reject the Bible. The logic of Wright's article in the book under review does, after all, go from the assumption that the account of Melchizedek in the book of Hebrews is neither historical nor true (pp. 167–70) to the proposition that the Book of Mormon is neither historical nor true (pp. 170–74). The lack of substantial historicity or truth in the Bible is an assumption that Wright begins with. Here the passage from Mormon 7:9 proves itself prophetic: "If ye believe that [the Bible] ye will believe this [the Book of Mormon] also."

28 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 29. Whether such a thing is possible is an issue that Wright avoids. Levenson ("Unexamined Commitments of Critical Scholars," 26) provides a cogent statement of the problem: "After secularism has impugned the worth of the Bible, and multiculturalism has begun to critique the cultural traditions at the base of which it stands, biblical scholars, including, I must stress, even the most antireligious among them, must face this paradoxical reality: the vitality of their rather untraditional discipline has historically depended upon the vitality of traditional religious communities, Jewish and Christian. Those whom [Wilfred Cantwell] Smith termed 'liberals'—that is, the scholars who assiduously place the Bible in the ancient Near Eastern or Greco-Roman worlds—have depended for their livelihood upon those who not only rejoice that the Bible survived these worlds but who also insist that it deserved to survive because its message is trans-historical." The position of the Book of Mormon critic is like that of the biblical one; it cannot live on its own.

29 Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 14.

critical mode usually "requires denying supernatural elements and discounting the evidential value of mystical and emotive-spiritual experience,"[30] but he insists that "the critical mode . . . has resulted in conclusions with a rather humanistic coloring" because it is "indicative of the truth behind the evidence."[31]

Wright says that "spiritual experience is not to be written off"[32] because "it leads an individual to recognize the *relevance* and meaning of the tradition and community to her or his [*sic*] life. It helps *bind* the individual to that tradition and community." And it "helps cultivate, among other things, a *common or community sense of morality* (in the broadest sense of that term) and a *common or community sense of purpose*."[33] But, to Wright, a spiritual experience is "not going to tell me much about the basic historical issues surrounding a scriptural text," such as whether the Book of Mormon is literal history or is true.[34] He admits that this is contrary to "the traditional understanding of most spiritual experience; i.e., spiritual experiences *prove* an external *objectivity*," but has decided to leave the scholarly overhaul of "spiritual experience in Mormon tradition" from "phenomenological, historical, hermeneutical, psychophysiological and theological perspectives" for another day.[35]

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30 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 29.

31 Ibid; see also Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13: "Admittedly, these critical conclusions and approach are more secular or humanistic in character than traditional views." Wright also charges F.A.R.M.S. with a "tendency toward secularism" because John Sorenson "argues for a limited Central American geography for the Book of Mormon" (ibid.). Wright seems not to have read John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, 2d ed. (Provo, Utah: F.A.r.M.S., 1992), 5–36, where Sorenson deals with Joseph Smith and the limited geography in detail; see also Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," lxxi–lxxiii. On the allegedly secularizing trends of some associated with F.A.R.M.S., see ibid., lii n. 130; David B. Honey and Daniel C. Peterson, "Advocacy and Inquiry in the Writing of Latter-day Saint History," *BYU Studies* 31/2 (Spring 1991): 139–79.

32 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 36 n. 4.

33 Ibid., emphasis in the original.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid. The study Wright proposes is practically impossible. Latter-day Saints in general have a well developed sense of the sacred, and thus feel that their spiritual experiences are too sacred to profane them by allowing scholars to examine them. Thus the data that would be gathered would not accurately reflect the full situation. Latter-day Saints have been repeatedly instructed to keep sacred things sacred; Proverbs 23:9; Matthew 7:6; 2 Corinthians 12:1–4; Alma 12:9–11; 3 Nephi 14:6; 17:17; 26:8–11; 28:12–

The "post-critically re-visioned religious perspectives" that Wright urges Latter-day Saints to pursue[36] include the adoption of the propositions that (1) "the 'gospel' was not the same in all ages" because he does not believe "the sacrificial system of the Hebrew Bible" to "represent the death of Jesus;"[37] (2) the traditional view "that the prophets are able to see far into the future and do so with clarity" must be rejected because he did not find it "sustainable upon critical study"[38] and (3) "the 'ancient' scriptures produced by Joseph Smith were not really ancient but his own compositions."[39] This sounds quite similar to Sherem's accusations that Jacob had "led away much of this people that they pervert the right way of God . . . and convert the law of Moses into the worship of a being which ye say shall come many hundred years hence. . . . This is blasphemy; for no man knoweth of such things; for he cannot tell of things to come" (Jacob 7:7). Shall we then conclude that Wright is dependent on Sherem because his account "has *the same elements in the same order*"?[40] (It must be noted that when Wright lays out his parallels [pp. 215–16], he does *not* take the text of Alma in order. In order to match the order of the texts in Hebrews 7:1–4, Wright must rearrange the order of Alma 13:7–19 first to Alma 13:17–19, then Alma 13:15 and finally Alma 13:7–9.) Or because Wright's article does not have Sherem's admission that "he had been deceived by the power of the devil" (Jacob 7:18), shall we conclude that "this seems to indicate that [Wright's article] has solved problems inherent in [Jacob], which means is it [*sic*] dependent upon it"?[41]

If the Book of Mormon does not speak "of things as they really are, and of things as they really will be" (Jacob 4:13), if it cannot lead us to "ask God, the Eternal Father, in the name of

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14; Ether 4:4–6; D&C 6:12; 8:10; 10:36–37; 76:115; 105:23–24; Moses 1:42; *PWJS* 396–97; *WJS* 311 n. 4; *HC* 2:230; 5:2, 344; *TPJS* 77, 237, 292; *JD* 4:371–72; Boyd K. Packer, *The Holy Temple* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 25–33; Gordon B. Hinckley, "Keeping the Temple Holy," *Ensign* 20/5 (May 1990): 52.

36 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 35.

37 Ibid., 30.

38 Ibid., 31, cf. 31–33.

39 Ibid., 33, cf. 33–35.

40 Ibid., 34.

41 Ibid. Compare to Wright's article in the volume under review, p. 171.

Christ, if these things are not true" so that "he will manifest the truth of it unto you by the power of the Holy Ghost" by which we "may know the truth of all things" (Moroni 10:4–5), what does Wright think it is good for? For Wright, "the Book of Mormon became a window to the religious soul of Joseph Smith. . . . It constituted the apprentice's workshop in which he became a prophet"[42]—a prophet who can " 're-vision' these prophecies of old for the present community"[43] but not "see far into the future" or "do so with clarity."[44] (He also tells us that "what applied to prophetic foresight also applied to prophetic hindsight.")[45] But can such a prophet who cannot "see far into the future" or the past possibly be relied on to witness of the resurrection, or even a Christ who atoned for our sins? Probably not, but David Wright nonetheless seems to be able to warn us about what will happen "to our children and the many generations after them."[46] Yet if our "community's current prophetic leaders" are the only ones allowed "to 're-vision' these prophecies of old for the present community, particularly our community," then the only way that Wright and company's revisions of scripture in ways contrary to the current prophetic leadership of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can be accepted under Wright's terms is if Wright and company have usurped the role of the prophets. Throughout his essay Wright talks much about "our community" but never about the Church, about "prophetic leaders" but never about the apostles or the General Authorities. Likewise, the Signaturi in their book have deliberately avoided saying anything about the General Authorities[47] lest someone ask who these people are to persuade us to disobey Christ and his apostles. For Wright, it would be "critical scholars who would constructively imagine new avenues of faith"[48]

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42 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 34–35. Wright seems to find this sort of mind reading fascinating; see his article in the book under review, pp. 166, 207–11.

43 Ibid., 33.

44 Ibid., 31.

45 Ibid., 33.

46 Ibid., 35.

47 An example of this is Ashment's attack on an anonymous "apologetic argument" (p. 338 n. 17). Should one look up his reference, one readily discovers that the individuals Ashment is attacking are Elders Mark E. Petersen and Bruce R. McConkie.

48 Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 14. One is of course reminded of D&C 1:16 ("they seek not the Lord to establish his righteousness, but

rather than prophets and apostles who are special witnesses of the way, the truth, and the light. Wright finds it "unfortunate" that his conclusion—that "traditional sources of knowledge [i.e., the scriptures, and the official Church history] are not sure sources of historical knowledge"—"disturbs" others.[49] If Wright really believes that his allegations would not be offensive to believers, then perhaps Jacob Neusner is right, and Wright is "merely naive."[50] Though Wright praises his own approach for its "open-endedness with respect to conclusions,"[51] he sidesteps the issue when asked if "the assumptions and conclusions within the secularist paradigm [are] also open to question."[52] Wright's piece sounds a warning that Metcalfe's volume would be an apologetic missionary tract for the revision.[53]

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every man walketh in his own way, and after the image of his own god, whose image is in the likeness of the world, and whose substance is that of an idol."); and 50:17–20 ("Doth he preach it by the Spirit of truth or some other way? And if it be by some other way it is not of God.")

49 Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13–14.

50 Jacob Neusner, "Is Wright Wrong?" *Sunstone* 16/5 (July 1993): 8.

51 Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13.

52 Hamblin, "The Final Step," 11. Back in 1960, in one of the most penetrating social critiques of education in the Church, Hugh Nibley made the following observation: "At once an agonized cry goes up from the faculty: 'How can you be so narrow, so biased, so prejudiced as to *begin* your researches by assuming that you already have the truth![']] While in Berkeley I got a letter from a BYU professor who gave me to know that because I believe the Book of Mormon I am not really qualified to teach history, and who ended his harangue with the observation that while I claim to *know* the truth, the gentlemen of the History Department, like true scholars, claim only to be *searching* for it. A noble sentiment, truly, but a phony one—are they really searching? For one thing, they don't believe for a moment that the truth of the Gospel can be found, and have only loud cries of rage and contempt for any who say they have found it—they are as sure that it doesn't exist as we are that it does; which is to say, our dedicated searchers for truth are dead sure that they have the answer already!" Hugh Nibley, "Nobody to Blame," (F.A.R.M.S. paper N-NOB), 7.

53 See the references in Wright, "Historical Criticism," 38 nn. 53, 59. I think that Wright and others are essentially correct in describing their experience as "conversion." Surely when they use such language they must realize that in normal usage if a person is said to convert from Catholicism to something even as unorganized as the New Age Movement, that person is no longer viewed as a Catholic. Carter (*Culture of Disbelief*, 216–23) provides an interesting discussion of why "liberals" and "believers" have trouble talking about or agreeing on issues. That Wright and company wish

What can we expect to be the results of conversion to the revisionist approach? Anthony Hutchinson assures us that redefining Joseph Smith's role in bringing forth the Book of Mormon as the "human origin of the English text" (p. 2), so that we can accept the Book of Mormon as "a work of scripture inspired by God in the same way that the Bible is inspired" (p. 1), "consists merely in a change of emphasis and tone" (p. 2). Hutchinson feels that "the gospel of Jesus Christ is ill-served if not undermined" by "current LDS approaches to the Book of Mormon [that] focus on its claims about itself"—specifically "the book's claims to ancient history" and "its value as a sign in authenticating LDS religious life" (p. 2)[54]—even though this directly contradicts the current counsel of the prophets and apostles. This brings to mind a statement Joseph Smith gave to the Twelve on 2 July 1839:

> I will give you one of the keys of the mysteries of the kingdom. It is an eternal principle that has existed with God from all Eternity[.] that man who rises up to condemn others, finding fault with the Church, saying that they are out of the way while he himself is righteous, then know assuredly that that man is in the high road to apostacy [*sic*] and if he does not repent will apostatize as God lives.[55]

Though several of the authors assure us that this will enhance our religious life (pp. ix, 1–2, 17, 211–13), several things undercut their air of assurance. To accept literally "a text as the word of God gives it a value as a guide and norm" and this is undermined by the authors' approach (p. 4). Hutchinson asks us to exchange our covenants for a pablum of "ethical monotheism and social concern or of human liberation" (p. 5), specifically

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to import this debate with those outside the faith into Mormonism is another reason why many within the faith feel that Wright and company have left the faith. In seeking to convert Mormons, they are proselyting; Wright, "Historical Criticism," 29.

54 Metcalfe also attacks this in "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 174–84. Unlike Hutchinson, however, Metcalfe makes no argument that this approach will make us better Christians.

55 Willard Richards Pocket Companion, 2 July 1839, in *WJS* 413 = *HC* 3:385 = *TPJS* 156–57.

liberation from "authoritarian approaches to church governance" (p. 17). (One should note that Hutchinson's stance differs from Wright's, who, though he does not believe in following the prophets' approach to the Book of Mormon, does not seem to want to be liberated from the prophets.) A slightly younger Metcalfe "saw the church's revelatory claims closely bound to the church's requirements for individuals. When one couldn't take the church's claims literally, he concluded, then neither need one take literally the church's commands,"[56] such as the Word of Wisdom.[57] Thus, since the 1980s, "Metcalfe's primary ties to the church consisted of an abiding interest in Mormon history and his devout extended family."[58] His "tenuous tie to the faith" remains "only on a family or social level."[59] Although he did not seem to see any reason to comply with commandments or covenants, "he declined" to "remove his name from the membership rolls" of the Church.[60] Surely Metcalfe is aware of the statement of Joseph Smith: "Take away the Book of Mormon and the revelations, and where is our religion? We have none."[61] Whether or not some of the contributors were aware that the book would be an effort to take away the religion of the Saints, the editor must have designed it so. The resultant book looks suspiciously like the work of "those few in deliberate noncompliance, including some who cast off on intellectual and behavioral bungee cords in search of new sensations, only to be jerked about by the old heresies and the old sins."[62] Jewish scholar Jacob Neusner viewed the approach as a "remarkable exemplification of the costs of ego-centrism in scholarship" which "illustrates the heavy price paid by self-absorbed intellectual provincialism in religious life."[63]

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56 Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander*, 286.

57 Ibid., 304–5.

58 Ibid. 24.

59 Vern Anderson, "Scholars Doubt Book of Mormon's Antiquity," *Salt Lake Tribune* (10 June 1993), A-7–8. I would like to thank Erik Myrup for graciously providing me with a copy of this item.

60 Ibid., A-8.

61 From the minutes of the conference in Norton, Ohio, 21 April 1834, in *HC* 2:52 = *TPJS* 71.

62 Neal A. Maxwell, "Settle This in Your Hearts," *Ensign* 22/11 (November 1992): 65.

63 Jacob Neusner, "Is Wright Wrong?" *Sunstone* 16/5 (July 1993): 7–8.

Mastering the Method

In the "Introduction," Metcalfe spews forth a slough of references, claiming that the books he cites are "introductions to critical methods" that will lead us in the paths of truth.[64] Most of these works are part of a series put out by Fortress Press, some of which are excellent, while others are disappointing. Unfortunately, Metcalfe and his authors have apparently either not read or not digested the works in his regurgitated list. That Metcalfe, as editor, did not catch this underscores his own failure to master the works and methods he so heartily commends. That many of the authors suffer from a failure to master the methods they have espoused is disappointing. Worse yet, some of the authors seem to have failed to master the basics of logic. Anthony Hutchinson is a case in point. Hutchinson does not like Hugh Nibley's use of the parallel method. So he provides three examples of false parallels and generalizes that, in parallel fashion, all parallels are false (pp. 8–10). But if "the parallel method is defective and should be recognized as such" (p. 10), then we should also recognize that Hutchinson's demonstration of that defectiveness is itself defective. There are false parallels—Hutchinson's paradoxical proof is an example of one—but if Hutchinson is going to insist that we abandon the method entirely in Book of Mormon studies, then the first thing to go should be the search for nineteenth-century parallels. He cannot have it both ways. Hutchinson has undercut not only himself, but many of his colleagues. Hutchinson's illogical explorations in critical methodology can be safely ignored.

Another example of failure to master a method is Stan Larson's work, wherein he tries to use textual criticism to show that the Book of Mormon is not an authentic witness to the

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64 Metcalfe also does this in "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 168 n. 48; his citation of Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1985) shows that he can hardly have read it carefully, since Sternberg attacks precisely Metcalfe's argument that if a book is literary it cannot be historical (ibid., 23–35); for Sternberg "every word [in the Hebrew Bible] is God's word. The product is neither fiction nor historicized fiction nor fictionalized history, but historiography pure and uncompromising" (ibid., 34–35). Because Metcalfe refers to many of these works only once without any page numbers and argues without a knowledge or understanding of their contents, one wonders if he has read any of them at all.

words of Jesus because its readings do not match those of several third- and fourth-century manuscripts of the Sermon on the Mount in eight places.

Larson maintains that "there is no evidence that anything was written down in Jesus' Aramaic language" (p. 117), although the early second century writer Papias wrote that "Matthew compiled the accounts in the Hebrew language."[65] Unjustly disparaged for years, Papias's comment has now been vindicated with the publication in 1987 of the Hebrew text of Matthew preserved in at least nine manuscripts.[66] Any attempt to reconstruct the original text of Matthew which fails to take this important version into account may justly be said to be defective as it preserves many early readings.[67] Specifically, three of Larson's eight examples are not supported by the Hebrew version (Examples 1–2, 4, pp. 121–24).[68] Thus, at Matthew 5:27 the Hebrew has *lqdmwnym*, paralleling the disparaged *tois archaiois* whose parallel "by them of old time" appears in 3 Nephi 12:27.[69] At Matthew 5:44, the Hebrew has *ʾhbw ʾwybykm wᶜśw ṭwbh lśwnʾkm wmkᶜyskm whtpllw bsbyl rwdpykm wlwḥṣykm* ("love your enemies, and do good to those who hate you and provoke you and pray on behalf of those who persecute you and oppress you"). Though this is not identical to 3 Nephi, it nevertheless has those phrases that Larson is so positive are not in the original text. At Matthew 5:30, the Hebrew concludes with *mšyʾbd kl gwpk bghynm* ("than that thy whole body perish in hell"). Even if this text does not directly support the Book of Mormon, it destroys Larson's requisite unanimity.

Yet Larson's having overlooked important manuscripts is not the least of his errors. His method of looking at the modern scholars (pp. 119, 127–28) and the best manuscripts (pp. 118, 127–28) is flawed for several reasons. The bias of his scholars insures that certain types of texts are preferred. Larson already

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65 Papias, fragment 2, in Eusebius, *Historiae Ecclesiasticae* III, 39, 16.

66 George Howard, *The Gospel of Matthew according to a Primitive Hebrew Text* (Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1987).

67 George Howard, "A Note on Codex Sinaiticus and Shem-Tob's Hebrew Matthew," *Novum Testamentum* 34/1 (1992): 46–47.

68 The scriptural passages in question are Matthew 5:27 / 3 Nephi 12:27; Matthew 5:30 / 3 Nephi 12:29–30; and Matthew 5:44 / 3 Nephi 12:44.

69 The issue might be raised that the Greek seems to have a text corrupted by homoteleuton here.

acknowledged "Constantius Tischendorf's preference for his important discovery (Codex Sinaiticus of the fourth century) and B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort's preference for the oldest uncial (Codex Vaticanus, also of the fourth century)" (p. 119). What Larson does not acknowledge is the United Bible Societies committee's well-known propensity to follow blindly the shorter of either Sinaiticus and Vaticanus, two manuscripts noted for their tendency to omit passages.[70] What Larson, and to some extent Tischendorf, Westcott, Hort, Aland, et al., have fallen for is the best manuscript fallacy.[71] As A. E. Housman reminds us: "It is in books where there is no best MS [manuscript] at all, and the editor, in order to escape the duty of editing, is compelled to feign one, that the worst mischief ensues."[72] There are times when even the worst manuscripts contain readings which are superior to those of the best manuscripts,[73] and thus the presence or absence of a reading in the "best" manuscripts—even if unanimous (pp. 119–20)—is no indication that the reading is correct. Housman had strong criticism of methods like Larson's: "Those who live and move and have their being in the world of words and not of things, and employ language less as a vehicle than as a substitute for thought, are readily duped by the assertion that this stolid adherence to a favourite MS, instead of being, as it is, a private and personal necessity imposed on certain editors by their congenital defects, is a principle; and that its name is 'scientific criticism' or 'critical method.' "[74] Larson has fallen into a common trap, the temptation "to choose the reading found in the oldest manuscripts, or the most manuscripts, or the 'best' manuscripts (i.e., those that preserve the largest number of superior readings). Such criteria, however, are unreliable. The reasoning behind them is specious."[75] This label of speciousness applied to Larson's method comes from Professor P. Kyle McCarter's lucid book on textual criticism, which Metcalfe so strongly recommends (p. ix n. 2).

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70 J. M. Ross, "Some Unnoticed Points in the Text of the New Testament," *Novum Testamentum* 25 (1983): 59–60.

71 Detailed in A. E. Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicon*, 5 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1937), 1:xxxi–xl. This deserves to be quoted at length, but cannot be.

72 Ibid., 1:xxxviii.

73 Ibid., ix.

74 Housman, *M. Manilii Astronomicon*, 1:xxxii.

75 P. Kyle McCarter, Jr., *Textual Criticism: Recovering the Text of the Hebrew Bible* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1986), 71.

Professor McCarter further notes, "It is unsafe . . . to suppose," as Larson has, "that a reading in an earlier manuscript is superior to one in a late manuscript,"[76] for "late manuscripts may preserve a newly discovered tradition."[77] Clearly Larson's method has a major methodological flaw in it. Latter-day Saints who believe the Book of Mormon should note a particular corollary to this argument. No matter how much Larson may argue for the priority of certain manuscripts, only one manuscript of the New Testament dates before A.D. 200, and it contains only ten complete words.[78] Yet it is precisely the second century (A.D. 100–199) that is characterized by accusations on all sides of deliberately corrupting the text.[79] Therefore even the best scholarship in textual criticism is unable to assure us of its capability to penetrate the fog of apostasy and produce the original text.[80]

From the perspective of textual criticism, there is a further flawed assumption that needs to be exposed. Larson, as many before him, assumes that variants in the Book of Mormon should be reflected in Old World manuscripts (pp. 116–17).[81] As far as textual criticism goes, it is methodologically incorrect

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76 Ibid.

77 Alexander Hugh McDonald, "Textual Criticism," in N. G. L. Hammond and H. H. Scullard, eds., *The Oxford Classical Dictionary*, 2d ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1970), 1049b.

78 The manuscript is Papyrus Rylands 457, also known as P^{52}. A photograph is included in J. Reuben Clark, Jr., *Why the King James Version* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1956), 8. The ten words are *hoi, oudena, hina, kai, hina, ek, tēs, legei, autō,* and *touto*. Its identification is a testament to the erudition of the papyrologists but its value for textual criticism is so low that it is not used in the 26th edition of Nestle-Aland's *Novum Testamentum Graece* at all.

79 Justin Martyr, *Dialogus cum Tryphone* 73; Irenaeus, *Contra Haereses* I, 7, 3; 8, 1; 9, 4; 18, 1; 19, 1; 20, 1–2; 22, 1–3; 26, 2; 27, 2, 4; III, 2, 1; V, 30, 1; Tertullian, *De Baptismo* 17; Tertullian, *Adversus Marcionem* IV, 2, 2–5; Tertullian, *De Praescriptione Haereticorum* 16–19, 38–40; Mārūṯā, *Against the Canons from the Synod of 318*, 5; Mārūṯā, *The Seventy-Three Canons* 1, The *Apocalypse of Peter* VII, 76, 24–78, 31; The *Apocalypse of Adam* V, 77, 18–82, 25; Epiphanius, *Panarion* 30, 13, 1, 14, 1; 42, 9, 1–2; see also Wilhelm Schneemelcher, "The History of the New Testament Canon," in Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher, eds., *New Testament Apocrypha*, 2 vols., trans. R. McL. Wilson (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1963–65), 1:31–34; Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 20–21.

80 Cf. Robinson, review of Vogel, ed., *The Word of God*, 318.

81 The same assumption underlies the objection of Wayne Ham in "Problems in Interpreting the Book of Mormon as History," *Courage* 1/1 (September 1970): 19–20.

to expect the Book of Mormon to agree or disagree with any given manuscript or set of manuscripts on any given textual variant. We no more expect the Book of Mormon to agree with Sinaiticus on any given variant than we expect the Peshitta or Codex Scheide to agree with Sinaiticus on the same variant. The purpose of textual criticism is not to establish the validity of the manuscript witnesses—*such validity is always a given*[82]—but to use the manuscript witnesses to establish the text.[83] Thus, from the standpoint of textual criticism, Larson cannot use a hammer whose purpose is nailing down the text to saw the Book of Mormon off from his list of manuscript witnesses. While his study demonstrates the independence of the Book of Mormon, this is precisely what we would expect if it is what it claims to be.

Another example of failure to master a method is Mark Thomas's rhetorical analysis of Nephite sacramental language. Thomas seems oblivious to the difference between a primary and a secondary source, a basic distinction in historical research. He betrays no indication that he is familiar with any of the primary material in the original language. In fact, he demonstrates relatively little knowledge of early Christianity in general. Thomas notes "the beginnings of liturgical requests for descent of the spirit as early as the second century" but downplays the significance of this by alluding to vast quantities of evidence of which "only a small portion [has been] summarized" in his work (p. 64). Considering that all of the evidence for the first one hundred fifty years of Christianity outside the New Testament (i.e., through ca. A.D. 180) fills approximately the same amount of space as the New Testament, the vast amount of which does not discuss the eucharist, any mention must be considered significant, if only for the paucity of evidence. Thomas thus provides insufficient basis for his conclusion that "Mormon liturgy is clearly not a restoration of ancient words in any literal sense" (p. 77)—how does Thomas know, since he has not demonstrated any knowledge of the original languages? It is abundantly clear

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82 Note that the discussion on "Authenticity" in McCarter, *Textual Criticism*, 65–66 refers to the readings, not the manuscripts. When a manuscript or version "reflects a reading that is different from that of the M[asoretic] T[ext], the critic is usually justified in regarding the reading as authentic"!

83 McCarter, *Textual Criticism*, 12: "The goal is the determination of a primitive text to which the various surviving copies bear witness."

that Thomas has not mastered the difference between the date of a text and the date of a manuscript or edition (p. 60 n. 3); but, as we shall see below, neither has his colleague, Mr. Ashment. Likewise, Thomas either has failed to do his homework or he has failed to learn how to cite sources properly; often throughout his essay, one comes across points that need demonstration (just how transubstantialist were American churches [p. 67]?)—or opinions that need references—where exactly is the reader to find where Helmut Koester gave his opinion on the date of the Didache (p. 63)?—where Thomas fails to provide the requisite information.

Mastering the Text

Besides having failed to master the method, most of the authors in this collection have failed to master the text of the Book of Mormon. This is the death-blow for Thomas's rhetorical analysis, since rhetorical analysis, of necessity, demands close reading of the text and an examination of how things are said.[84] Can a twenty-eight-page essay on rhetoric in the Book of Mormon be taken seriously when it quotes from the source it is rhetorically analyzing a mere dozen times? Some of Thomas's assertions are also suspect. He contends that "most prayers in the Book of Mormon seem to be spontaneous expressions of the spirit," including "the two eucharistic prayers in Moroni" (p. 56). This nonsense certainly fits his "belief that the Book of Mormon model was likely from a traditional spontaneous prayer of these so-called 'free churches' " (p. 60), but it does not fit with what the Book of Mormon specifically says. When Moroni gives "the manner of administering" the sacrament (Moroni 5:1, cf. 4:1), he writes, "they did kneel down with the church, and

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84 Metcalfe ("Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 161 and n. 29, 168) attempts to use a rhetorical argument to disparage the historicity of 1 Nephi 2:6–7 because he would see it as parallel to Exodus 3:18; 5:3; 8:27. We will overlook the fact that Metcalfe's longest ellipsis in the Exodus passages is three words, while the average ellipsis in his quotation of 1 Nephi is 10.5 words; we will also overlook the differences in vocabulary between the two passages. Almost the same elements are found in Xenophon, *Anabasis* I, 2, 10: On a military march into foreign territory, "*they* remained there [Peltas] *three days*, during which Xenias, the Arcadian, *sacrificed* the Lykaion and held a contest." Metcalfe could just as easily argue that Xenophon is ahistorical, but I would find it no more convincing.

pray to the Father in the name of Christ, saying . . ." (Moroni 4:2). Moroni reports what the priest actually "said" (Moroni 5:1). If this were to be an example of a typical utterance following a general pattern, we would expect it to have been introduced as other such typical utterances are in the Book of Mormon: "he did exclaim many things unto the Lord; such as . . ." (1 Nephi 1:14–15). The two samples, dictated—according to Metcalfe (p. 413 and passim)—only a few days apart, show a marked contrast in rhetorical style, a contrast that points to a contrast in meaning. This points clearly to the distinction between what Thomas believes the Book of Mormon to say and what it in fact actually says. Time after time, instead of determining first what a term means in the Book of Mormon and then comparing or contrasting it with the usage current in Joseph Smith's time, Thomas simply compares the terms and attempts to derive the meaning of the Book of Mormon text from sources inimical to it.[85]

In any case, Thomas's argument, as an historical interpretation of Joseph Smith's religious experience, is nonsense. Thomas wants to see Joseph Smith as borrowing the Nephite sacrament prayers from "frontier worship of western New York" (p. 73, cf. 65–73). Is this the same Joseph Smith who infuriated his contemporaries—and many of ours—by claiming that God told him the churches he knew in his youth "were all wrong" and "that all their creeds were an abomination in his sight" (Joseph Smith—History 1:19)? Is Thomas's Joseph Smith, who eclectically borrows what he hears in Protestant meetings, the same Joseph Smith who told his mother how worthless those meetings were and how little he learned at them?[86] Thomas expects us to believe that the rhetoric of the

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85 An example of this is his completely ignoring the work of Louis Midgley on the use of the term "remember" in the Book of Mormon when he glosses over the term (69–70). See Louis Midgley, "The Ways of Remembrance," in John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1991), 168–76; Louis C. Midgley, " 'O Man, Remember, and Perish Not,' (Mosiah 4:30)," in John W. Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1992), 127–29; cf. John W. Welch, "Our Nephite Sacrament Prayers," in ibid., 286–89.

86 She reports him as saying, "I can take my Bible, and go into the woods and learn more in two hours than you can learn at meeting in two years, if you should go all the time." Lucy Mack Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet and his Progenitors for Many*

Book of Mormon "indicates" what "Joseph Smith believed" (p. 61 n. 4), and that the Book of Mormon mediates between fixed and spontaneous liturgical prayers (pp. 56–58), whatever that may mean. Meanwhile Thomas ignores the curious fact that the sacramental prayers in the Doctrine and Covenants (20:77, 79) are identical to those in the Book of Mormon (Moroni 4:3, 5:2), and, excepting one change (D&C 27:1–4), are identical to the sacramental prayers that have been used in the Church ever since. Thomas expects us to believe that Joseph Smith wrote a large book based on his religious views and spontaneous liturgical prayers but in the last thirty pages completely changed his mind and for the rest of his life stuck to fixed liturgical prayers (pp. 55–58).

It is not just his method, his historical evidence or his text that Thomas has failed to master. He has even failed to master the arguments of his collaborators. Thomas's argument contradicts that of his editor, for Metcalfe believes that doctrinal development proceeds along Joseph Smith's chronology and not internal Book of Mormon chronology, which can only work if the Book of Mormon was dictated in a sequence other than it appears in print. Thomas's argument assumes that the dictation sequence of the Book of Mormon began with 1 Nephi; the burden of Metcalfe's work is to demonstrate that this is false. Metcalfe and Thomas cannot both be right.

They can, however, both be wrong. Metcalfe takes the argument that Mosiah through Moroni was *translated* before 1 Nephi through Words of Mormon and alters it to state that Mosiah was *written* before 1 Nephi. He seeks to demonstrate a distinct development and change in doctrine and style within the Book of Mormon which he uses as an indication of chronological development. Metcalfe relies on phenomena that he sees as present in the last and first parts of the Book of Mormon but absent from Mosiah. Though Metcalfe has his share of methodological blunders, one of his biggest problems is that his arguments are often based on misreadings of the text. Since many of the phenomena that he sees as appearing toward the later stage of

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Generations (Lamoni, IA: The Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, 1912, reprinted Independence, Missouri: Herald, 1969), 101 = Lucy Mack Smith, *History of Joseph Smith, by His Mother, Lucy Mack Smith* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1901), 90.

the translation process occur in the Book of Mosiah (and thus at the beginning of the translation process) his envisioned development does not hold. What follows are a few examples.

Metcalfe argues that Nephi, son of Lehi, knows that Christ will appear to the Nephites after his resurrection but the prophets from Mosiah to 3 Nephi do not because they "say nothing about his resurrection advent" (p. 418). This, if true, would still be nothing more than a classic argument from silence (*argumentum e silentio*).[87] Metcalfe argues from Alma 16:20 that "the people's uncertainty, which Alma himself shares (7:8), implies that nothing had been taught about a promise that Christ would visit America, a promise Nephi earlier described in detail" (p. 418). What Alma is uncertain about, however, is if Christ "will come

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87 For an amusing illustration of this fallacy, see Tom Nibley, "A Look at Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 280–83.

The argument from silence also appears in Firmage, "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 61, where Firmage contends that the small plates were a "literary fiction" because he claims they are not mentioned in some parts of the Book of Mormon. To support this, Firmage cites, *inter alia*, Mosiah 28:11: "he took the records engraven on the plates of brass, and also the plates of Nephi, and *all the things which he had kept and preserved according to the commands of God*, after having caused to be written the records which were on the plates of gold which had been found by the people of Limhi" (emphasis added). On the basis of this passage alone I find Firmage's argument unconvincing. Since the phrase "all the things which he had kept" clearly includes the plates of gold found by the people of Limhi and other things as well, I see no reason that Mormon, in making an *abridgment* of the records, should have had to include an itemized list of everything passed down simply so that someone like Ed Firmage could be satisfied. Furthermore, Firmage's argument about Mormon's comments in the Words of Mormon shows a surprising naïveté about the compiling of ancient records.

Firmage's arguments about there being no mention of disputations to which there are revelations imply that the disputations did not exist in ancient days but only in Joseph Smith's time (Firmage, "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 62–63). These also are arguments from silence served up with naiveté and hubris. The ancient historical record is rife with gaps in our knowledge and things mentioned that we would like to know more about. To pull a random example: In the biography of Ahmose si Ibana, Ahmose mentions that when he was young he slept in a *smt šnw* (Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie* [Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906–], 2.16). Should we therefore argue, because in 3,000 years of Egyptian history there is no other mention of this cloth object, that Ahmose never existed and that his biography is a fraud? I trow not.

among us at the time of his dwelling in his mortal tabernacle" (Alma 7:8), which is different from Alma's teaching that Christ "would appear unto them after his resurrection" (Alma 16:20). Alma knows that Christ will appear to the Nephites after his resurrection but is not certain about whether he would appear to them before his resurrection.[88] There is no demonstrable "ignorance of Nephi's prophecies" here to be "explained by Mosian priority" (p. 418).[89]

Metcalfe would further have us believe that Joseph Smith switched from penitent to Christocentric baptism with the coming of Christ. In this, however, he follows the example of the blind men and the elephant mistaking various facets of the same experience for different things. With baptism the individual witnesses that he has repented of his sins, takes on the name of Christ, and becomes a member of the Christian community, all at the same time. If we look at the ways in which this appears in Book of Mormon verses, we find that there is no neat division such as that which Metcalfe envisions. Metcalfe argues that, "in Mormon's abridgment from Mosiah to 3 Nephi 10, baptism helps to effectuate repentance; from 3 Nephi 11 through the dictation of the replacement text [the small plates], the emphasis is on Jesus Christ" (p. 420). Metcalfe completely ignores the standard scripture on baptism in Mosiah 18:8–17 in his chart on various types of baptism. In Mosiah 18:17 we read: "And they

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88 Metcalfe's argument has already been dealt with in Nibley, "A Look at Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 275. It does bring up the problem of Metcalfe's arguments' excessive dependence on the refuted arguments of the Tanners (see esp. p. 433 n. 49). But then again, he still maintains that Joseph Smith was "indebted to broader cultural sources such as anti-masonic rhetoric" (p. 413; cf. Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 172) even though this has been conclusively demonstrated to be a mirage; see Daniel C. Peterson, "Notes on 'Gadianton Masonry'," in Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin, eds., *Warfare in the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 174–224; Daniel C. Peterson, " 'Secret Combinations' Revisited," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 184–88; Matt Roper, review of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 184–85.

89 The same fallacious argument appears in Firmage, "Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 60, augmented with a generous helping of mind-reading. Firmage's arguments fail for the same reasons Metcalfe's do.

were called the church of God, or the church of *Christ*, from that time forward. And it came to pass that whosoever was baptized by the power and authority of God was added to his church." Here we are explicitly told that anyone who is baptized by the power and authority of God becomes a member of the church of Christ even though Metcalfe would have us believe that such references to Christ are "virtually absent from Mosiah through 3 Nephi 10" (pp. 420–21). Also telling is Mosiah 26:22–23: "For behold, this is my church; whosoever is baptized shall be baptized unto repentance. And whomsoever ye receive shall believe in my name; and him will I freely forgive. For it is I that taketh upon me the sins of the world." This is clearly a Christian text as the context makes clear; the revelation was prompted because "many of the rising generation" "would not be baptized; neither would they join the church" because they did not "believe concerning the coming of *Christ*" (Mosiah 26:1–4). With the earliest references to baptism in Mosiah being Christocentric, Metcalfe's argument for doctrinal development collapses.

Metcalfe also argues that the meaning of the term "churches" changes from "congregation" to "denomination." Here he has a distinction without a difference. Mosiah 25:22 illustrates Metcalfe's illogic here: Do we, with Metcalfe, take the statement "notwithstanding there being many churches they were all one church" to mean "notwithstanding there being many congregations they were all one congregation" *or* "notwithstanding there being many congregations they were all one denomination"? Since the word "church" has both the meanings of "denomination" and "congregation" in Mosiah, Metcalfe's argument does not hold.

The Question of Translation

It seems apparent from Metcalfe's arguments that he has never done any translation himself.[90] Metcalfe assumes that when translating from one language to another the same word in the target language is consistently used to translate a given word in the source language whenever it appears. This is not necessarily true. It is for this reason that Metcalfe's argument that alternation between "wherefore" and "therefore" proceeds along

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90 This is also true of his arguments against the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible in "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 179–83.

chronological lines (pp. 408–14) is an interesting bit of irrelevancy. Its use to discredit the Book of Mormon involves the assumption that Latter-day Saints do not believe that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon into his own language. I know of no Latter-day Saint, no matter how conservative, who disputes the assertion that Joseph translated the Book of Mormon into his own nineteenth-century English. It is, nevertheless, something different to argue that, because Joseph used his own language, the revelations he received or the translations he made were therefore not divine or normative or historical or true.[91]

The same reasoning can be applied to Metcalfe's arguments about the usage of *Christ* and *Messiah* (pp. 427–33). There is no reason why we must postulate different underlying words for "Messiah" and "Christ" in the original Book of Mormon text. "Messiah" and "Christ" do, after all, both mean "the anointed one." The distinction between "Messiah" and "Christ" when used together in the Book of Mormon is one of generic versus specific, between the concept of a messiah as understood by the Jews and the particular being that the Nephites believe to be the messiah. Thus Nephi urges his readers to "believe in Christ, the Son of God, [specific] . . . and look not forward any more for another Messiah [general]" (2 Nephi 25:16). Thus the distinction between "Messiah" and "Christ" can be viewed as a nuance of English exploited that we "might come to understanding" (D&C 1:24), but need not reflect anything about the Nephite language. Thus the textual variant in 1 Nephi 12:18 noted by Metcalfe (pp. 429–32) is an adjustment of the English translation (which does not change the meaning—for Nephi, Joseph Smith, and Mormons, the Messiah is Christ) and need argue nothing about the original text.

Metcalfe's real issue is not Mosian priority but Book of Mormon authorship. The arguments for Mosian priority have been made before by Richard Bushman[92] and John W.

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91 See also Stephen E. Robinson, review of Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God*, 316–17.

92 Richard Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 99, 223 n. 67. Ignore everything after the first three paragraphs in note 67 as the rest is based on a forgery by Metcalfe's former friend and colleague, Mark Hofmann; see Sillitoe and Roberts, *Salamander*, 255–63, 540–41.

Welch,[93] both of whom accept the Book of Mormon as historical. Metcalfe is so eager to have the evidence "point to Smith as the narrative's chief designer" (p. 433) that he has let this conclusion cloud his judgment and his readings. All his arguments for the internal developments of themes are spurious.

The Labors of Hercules

To rid the field of Joseph Smith's repeated assertions that the Book of Mormon was a translation, Metcalfe enlists the aid of Edward H. Ashment, an insurance salesman. Ashment has a tall order ahead of him. He must (1) clear the ground of all adduced signs of ancient origins by appearing to destroy all evidence of Hebraisms and Egyptianisms adduced in the Book of Mormon, all suggestions advanced for ancient onomastica in the Book of Mormon, and all solutions proposed for script and language of the Book of Mormon. Since, however, he cannot leave a vacuum, he must (2) plant other theories in their place by explaining the proposed Hebraisms as part of Joseph Smith's style, providing a plausible explanation for all the ancient-sounding names, and explaining the translation process of Joseph Smith. This is a sizeable task, and it would appear that Ashment has bitten off more than he can chew.

Questions of Original Language

Asking what the original language of the Book of Mormon was is a legitimate question. Scholars ask this of many documents for which the historical setting is uncertain and especially where it is suspected that the present form of the document is a translation.[94] Criteria differ depending upon the translator, the source and target language of the document, as well as the presence of intermediary languages. The general method is to look for imperfections in the translation—and hope there are some—

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93 Welch, *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, 1–8.

94 Examples may be found throughout literature on the pseudepigrapha, as may be seen in many of the introductions to individual works in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983–85). But genuine as well as dubious works are preserved only in translation; e.g. Johannes Quasten, *Patrology*, 4 vols. (Utrecht: Spectrum, reprinted Westminster, Maryland: Christian Classics, 1990), 2:43.

where the original language shows through; sometimes things said in one language just cannot be expressed in another. A second technique is to look for word plays that work in the source language but not in the target language. Yet another method is to look at personal names and determine where the personal names would fit.[95] All of these methods have been used with respect to the Book of Mormon.

The question of original language usually goes hand in hand with the original setting of the text. The text is understood quite differently depending on the setting in which it is placed. In many scholarly discussions of original language, the original setting for the text is assumed and then the original language is decided based on a preconceived notion of what the setting is. Thus for those who would view the Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century fiction it is important to establish that the original language is English. Methodologically, the place to start is what the text claims for itself, for if you assume that the document is a forgery to begin with nothing will ever change your mind.[96]

Just so, as a preliminary, Ashment describes some of the Book of Mormon statements about the language and script in which it is written (pp. 331–32). His summary is brief, too brief in fact. The term *language* occurs forty-three times in the Book of Mormon, and can represent both script (Mosiah 1:4; 8:11; 9:1; 24:4; 3 Nephi 5:18; Ether 3:22) and speech (1 Nephi 1:15; 3:21; 5:3, 6, 8; 10:15; 17:22; 2 Nephi 31:3; Omni 1:18; Alma 5:61; 7:1; 26:24; 46:26; Helaman 13:37), and thus it is often ambiguous (e.g. 1 Nephi 1:2).[97] The "language of the Egyptians" occurs twice (1 Nephi 1:2; Mosiah 1:4), though it is not immediately apparent from either of these passages whether this expression refers to the writing system or the tongue. Mormon 9:32 indicates that the term "Egyptian" at least refers to the

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95 Edward FitzGerald's *Rubáiyát of Omar Khayyám* is faultless English but the names indicate the original source.

96 Frederich Blass, "Hermeneutik und Kritik," *Einleitende und Hilfs-Disziplinen*, vol. 1 of Iwan von Müller's *Handbuch der klassischen Altertumswissenschaft* (München: Beck, 1886), 268; Nibley, "New Approaches to Book of Mormon Study," *CWHN* 8: 55–56; Daniel C. Peterson, review of Nibley, *Prophetic Book of Mormon*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 2 (1990): 168.

97 The misunderstanding of the Book of Mormon's usage of the term "language" is where Firmage's analysis ("Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 59–60) initially goes astray.

the "characters,"[98] while the next verse mentions that the Nephites knew Hebrew (Mormon 9:33). This ambiguity more than anything else is what produces the wide variety of work by those who accept the Book of Mormon as an ancient text, and explains why the wide variety has been tolerated.[99]

Ashment claims that "the statement that Egyptian characters were so 'reformed . . . *according to our manner of speech*' (emphasis added) that they would have been unintelligible . . . would be an unparalleled phenomenon" (p. 331, quoting Mormon 9:32 but omitting the citation). Ashment has made some unwarranted assumptions here. The first assumption is that, when Moroni says "none other people knoweth our language," he refers to the "script" of the Nephites. Contrary to Ashment's assertions, this would not be unparalleled: Although

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98 Cf. *PJS* 1:399, 425. Edwin Firmage, Jr.'s, explanation ("Historical Criticism and the Book of Mormon," 59–60), is far fetched. Anthon described the characters he was shown on more than one occasion. The Mormon version is that "he said that they were Egyptian, Chaldeak, Assyriac, and Arabac, and he said that they were true characters." (*PJS* 1:285 ≈ *HC* 1:20 = Joseph Smith-History 1:64). The anti-Mormon version is that "this paper was in fact a singular scrawl. It consisted of all kinds of crooked characters disposed in columns, and had evidently been prepared by some person who had before him at the time a book containing various alphabets. Greek and Hebrew letters, crosses and flourishes, Roman letters inverted or placed sideways, were arranged in perpendicular columns, and the whole ended in a rude delineation of a circle divided into various compartments, decked with various strange marks, and evidently copied after the Mexican Calendar given by Humboldt, but copied in such a way as not to betray the source whence it was derived." (Charles Anthon, letter to E. D. Howe dated 17 February 1834, in E. D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed* [Painsville: E.D. Howe, 1834], 271–72.) From these two accounts it is clear that Anthon had not the slightest idea what the characters he saw were; he instead describes what he saw in terms of things with which he was at least vaguely familiar. Firmage would have us believe that, of all the ancient scripts that Anthon mentioned, Joseph Smith happened to pick the one in which one of the earliest known versions of any biblical passage is preserved (see below).

99 For years I have been noting, at least mentally—more recently in print—that many of the Hebraisms deduced for the Book of Mormon were true of Egyptian as well. See John Gee, review of Daniel H. Ludlow, ed., *The Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 179–80, esp. n. 7. It did not seem as though sufficient evidence existed to decide the issue of whether the underlying text of the Book of Mormon was a literary form of Egyptian used by Hebrew speakers or whether the language was simply Hebrew. A careful study of the arguments against which Ashment contends persuades me that decisive evidence does exist, which I shall present below.

both of the Meroitic scripts are based on Egyptian scripts, the symbols do not necessarily have the same phonetic values, and the basic language is not the same, so that to an Egyptian, a Meroitic inscription would have been unintelligible—with the exception of a few words, phrases, and signs Meroitic is largely unintelligible to everyone even today. It is common practice when adapting a script to another language to alter it according to the manner of speech of the new language. For example, the Sumerian sign *g̃á* had the Sumerian readings of *pisan* "box" and *g̃á* "house," the latter value being also used purely phonetically. When Akkadian speakers adopted the Sumerian writing system, they borrowed the word *pisan* as *pisannu* but did not write the loan word with the sign, and not having the phoneme [g̃] in their phonemic inventory changed the value of the sign to *g̃á*. Demotic also altered its writing system in line with the spoken language, which is why the same sign can represent (among other things) both *nȝ* "the (plural)" and *n=y* "to me"; this is one of the reasons why Demotic is notoriously difficult to learn.

Anxious to distance any Mesoamerican writing system from Egyptian, Ashment compares Mayan glyphs to cuneiform and contrasts them with Egyptian. He supports his arguments by referring to Yale University's Maya expert Michael Coe (pp. 341–42).[100] This is peculiar since Coe, in the book Ashment cites, repeatedly compares Mayan studies to Egyptology[101] and the Mayan glyphs to Egyptian hieroglyphs.[102] The whole dis-

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100 Coe is no friend of the Mormons. He refers to the "fantastic theorizing by the lunatic and near-lunatic fringe" that he heard from "an Apostle of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints (Reorganized)" Michael D. Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code* (New York: Thames and Hudson, 1992), 194.

101 Ibid., 34–35, 50, 54, 226, 235, 249, 260–62, 274. Coe even says of the Maya pyramids: "I have read in many books that the Maya pyramids were nothing like the Egyptian ones in that they weren't used for royal tombs. That this is sheer, unfounded nonsense has been shown again and again. . . . Cheops would have felt right at home." Ibid., 66.

102 Ibid., 147, 263–64. As an Egyptian specialist, I find one of the most intriguing comparisons to be one that Coe missed: The Mayan verb, according to Coe, uses the same set of pronouns to conjugate transitive verbs as it does to indicate possession of nouns (ibid., 51–52); the same phenomenon coincidentally occurs in Egyptian with the suffix pronouns. This is not to say that there is a connection between the two. The modern Greek subjunctive shares many peculiarities with the Middle Egyptian *sḏm=f*; I know the histories of both of these languages and much of the history of their cultural contacts and can say that there is no possible causal

cussion by Ashment seems completely irrelevant, since no one Ashment cites has suggested that the Book of Mormon was written in Mayan, or claimed that the Nephites were the Mayans or that the Nephites had much significant contact, if any at all, with the Mayans, just as his poorly reproduced and often lopped-off inscriptions (p. 340, figure 6) from four different cultures, genres, scripts, and time periods (all at least 400 years apart) seem irrelevant.[103] The sole reason for this confused digression seems to be that Ashment has found Moroni's statement about Nephite writing problematic because Ashment assumes "that Egyptian characters were somehow conceptual and thus capable of conveying more information" than Hebrew characters could (p. 331).

Joseph Smith on Translating the Book of Mormon

Bearing in mind the assumption that the Book of Mormon text claims to be written in conceptual characters, Ashment's next objective is to try to demonstrate that Joseph Smith considered them to be conceptual characters also (pp. 332–37). In this discussion he relies completely on secondary summaries and,

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connection between the two, though the coincidence is striking. I have not seen any evidence that convinces me that the Mayan had any connection with the Nephites and thus can see no reason why there should necessarily be any connection between the Egyptians and the Mayans. I merely find the parallel intriguing. Likewise, students of the Book of Mormon will find David Stuart's decipherment of the Mayan Anterior Date and Posterior Date Indicators as *utiy* ("it had come to pass") and *iual ut* ("and then it came to pass") respectively, very intriguing (ibid., 240–41).

103 The figures Ashment provides are (a) the first two broken lines of an Eighteenth Dynasty (during the reign of Amenhotep III, ca. 1353 B.C.) Egyptian funerary inscription from the north side, lower west end of the passage to the court of the tomb of Kheruef (see The Epigraphic Survey, *The Tomb of Kheruef: Theban Tomb 192* [Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1980], plate 22); (b) the first eleven lines of the prologue to the famous law code of Hammurabi (ca. 1760–50 B.C.) which have been rotated 90° from their orientation on the stele (probably taken from Riekele Borger, *Babylonisch-assyrische Lesestücke* [Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963], Tafel 2); (c) the Siloam inscription from the reign of Hezekiah (ca. 701 B.C.); and (d) part of one (or two?) Mayan inscription(s) (the earliest dated Mayan inscription is A.D. 292 and the latest is 889; see Coe, *Breaking the Maya Code*, 63, 68). Metcalfe's book is inconsistent about its attribution of figures; cf. the fuss on p. 295.

while noting that no information was forthcoming from Joseph Smith himself, completely ignores the statements of those present during the translation.[104] Joseph said that "it was not intended to tell the world all the particulars of the coming forth of the book of Mormon, & also said that it was not expedient for him to relate these things,"[105] save that he "translated them into the english [*sic*] language, by the gift and power of God."[106] Ashment only gives small excerpts of Smith's statement that

> the Title Page of the Book of Mormon is a literal translation, taken from the very last leaf, on the left hand side of the collection or book of plates, which contained the record which has been translated; ~~and not by any means~~ the language of the whole running same as all Hebrew writing in general; and that, said Title Page is not by any means a modern composition either of mine or of any other man's who has lived or does live in this generation."[107]

In another pertinent statement that Ashment omits, Emma Smith, who acted for a time as scribe, said that "when he [Joseph] came to proper names he could not pronounce, or long words, he spelled them out. . . . Even the word Sarah [*sic*] he could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him."[108]

Since the only individual who knew the translation process first-hand said little, and Ashment ignores those who were present during the translation, how does Ashment make a case for

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104 For a critical evaluation of these statements, see Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/1 (Winter 1990): 51–56. It may be worth noting that the eyewitnesses to the translation are the ones who argue for a tight control of the process, while those arguing for loose control of the translation process are not eyewitnesses.

105 Donald Q. Cannon, and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record: Minutes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 23. This comes from the minutes of the General Conference held in Orange, Ohio, on 25 October 1831.

106 *PJS* 2:71 = *PWJS* 77 ≈ *PJS* 1:128 (9 November 1835). This material is missing from *HC* 2:304.

107 *PJS* 1:300 ≈ *HC* 1:71 ≈ *TPJS* 7.

108 Emma Smith, cited in Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," 52. As Skousen points out (ibid., 69 n. 29), the name is probably Sariah, not Sarah. Also quoted in Russell M. Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," *Ensign* 23/7 (July 1993): 62.

conceptual characters on the gold plates? To do so, he enlists the aid of a single sheet of paper containing a series of four disjointed notes in the handwriting of Frederick G. Williams, without explanation and without date. It is generally thought that "these statements were part of what was being studied at the School of the Prophets in Kirtland," though this too is speculation because the statements are "given no context, heading, or comment," and are "not attributed to Joseph or anyone else."[109] Given a document wandering without an identifiable historical context Ashment concocts his own historical scenario:

> *It is certainly conceivable that there would be* heightened interest in the language of the Book of Mormon at this time, with its peculiar mix of Egyptian and Hebrew, just as Smith and his close associates were beginning to study Hebrew in earnest. As they were studying Hebrew with the prophet in December 1835 they *must have* asked him a question about the language of the Book of Mormon requesting a back-transliteration [*sic*][110] (p. 333 n. 12, emphasis added).[111]

Must they have? If these documents were actually produced—as Ashment claims—on 5 December 1835 when Joseph Smith studied Hebrew with Oliver Cowdery and Frederick G.

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109 John W. Welch, ed., *Reexploring the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1992), 58–59. The statement about "no context" was made about a transcript by John M. Bernhisel, but it applies equally to all the documents in question. A copy of the document in Frederick G. William's handwriting is on p. 61.

110 Throughout pages 332–34 Ashment shows considerable confusion about the use of the term "transliteration." Thus he labels a translation, a transliteration of a translation, and a transliteration all transliterations. To be clear on this point: *Translation* is the transfer of a text from one *language* to another. *Transliteration* is the transfer of a text from one *script* to another (generally into the Latin alphabet). This distinction is fundamental and drilled into all first-year Egyptian students. Has Ashment forgotten so much?

111 The reader may compare this use of rhetoric instead of evidence with samples provided in Hugh Nibley, "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book (A Handbook for Beginners)," in *Tinkling Cymbals and Sounding Brass: The Art of Telling Tales about Joseph Smith and Brigham Young*, *CWHN* 11:495–99; and Stephen E. Robinson, review of D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, in *BYU Studies* 27/4 (1988): 92.

Williams,[112] then we might well ask why the notes do not match the transliteration system Joseph Smith and his associates were wont to use.[113] Since Ashment admits that "Smith's Hebrew transliterations are recognizable as such" (p. 335) and since this is not recognizable as such, it is likely not Smith's. Ashment assumes a story of pure fantasy. It is equally conceivable—and equally hypothetical—that the notes come from Daniel Peixotto's Hebrew class and suggest why the brethren determined that he was "not qualified to give us the knowledge we wish to acquire."[114] If "it is clear from the Prophet's diaries, as well as the journals of the scribes, that he often dictated to his assistants, it is equally clear that the scribes and clerks often composed and recorded information on their own."[115] Why then should an undated scrap of paper without any historical context and admittedly at variance with Joseph Smith's regular practice be assumed to reflect perfectly Joseph Smith's ideas simply because it contains samples of the handwriting of someone who was Joseph Smith's scribe at one point in his life?[116]

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112 The incident is recorded in *PJS* 2:95 = *PWJS* 97 ≈ *PJS* 1:152 ≈ *HC* 2:325.

113 Joseph records having previously studied Hebrew on 20, 21, 23, 27 November and 4 December 1835; see *PJS* 1:144, 147, 151; 2:87–88, 90; *PWJS* 91–93, 96; *HC* 2:300, 318–21, 325; possibly he studied it on 11–12 November 1835 as well; see *PJS* 2:74. Daniel Peixotto had been in the area since at least 2 November 1835 and had been determined unqualified to teach the subject; see *PJS* 1:119, 144–45; 2:63; *PWJS* 70, 91; *HC* 2:318–19; D. Kelly Ogden, "The Kirtland Hebrew School (19835–36)," in Milton V. Backman, Jr., *Regional Studies in Latter-day Saint Church History: Ohio* (Provo, Utah: Department of Church History and Doctrine, Brigham Young University, 1990), 67. Ashment's date of "January 1836, when Smith began his formal study of Hebrew" (pp. 334–35) is difficult to square with the other historical sources.

114 *PJS* 2:87 = *PWJS* 91 ≈ *PJS* 1:144–45 ≈ *HC* 2:318–19.

115 Howard C. Searle, "Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith: A Review Essay," *BYU Studies* 21/1 (Winter 1981): 105.

116 On the problems of Joseph Smith and his scribes see Dean C. Jessee, "Priceless Words and Fallible Memories: Joseph Smith as Seen in the Effort to Preserve His Discourses," *BYU Studies* 31/2 (Spring 1991): 19–40; Dean C. Jessee, "Preface," in *PWJS* xiii–xix; Dean C. Jessee, "General Introduction," *PJS* 1:xix–xxxi; Dean C. Jessee, "Introduction to Joseph Smith's Journal," *PJS* 2:xxi–xxv; Searle, "Authorship of the History of Joseph Smith," 101–22. For a general treatment of the problems of "misrepresentation," "distortion," and "anomalies," see Stephen E. Robinson, *Are Mormons Christians?* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 12–21.

Ante hoc ergo propter hoc?[117]

Rather than accept Joseph Smith's own statements that he translated the Book of Mormon, Ashment argues that if the alleged Hebraisms are part of Joseph Smith's own ordinary language, then they cannot be seen as ancient. Immediately he runs into a problem; there are no samples of Joseph Smith's personal writings (e.g., letters, journals) from either before or around the time of the translation of the Book of Mormon with which to test for stylistic material. Therefore Ashment examines the language of the 1833 *Book of Commandments*, assuming that the words contained in the Doctrine and Covenants are solely those of Joseph Smith (pp. 359, 361–62, 375–85). (Note that Ashment's method assumes that God had nothing to do with the Doctrine and Covenants at all.) Ashment then uses this sampling of 1833 material to determine what is indicative of Joseph Smith's language usage in 1829.[118] This leads to an anachronism, since language which Ashment would see as Hebraisms in the Doctrine and Covenants comes after the Book of Mormon. Furthermore, if Joseph "translated" rather than invented the Book of Mormon, then we might expect some of the mannerisms of speech used in a lengthy work which he was engaged in translating to have had some impact on his style of speech.[119] Peculiarities of language and expression do influence the style of someone who works with a language to any great extent. (Recently one Egyptologist observed to me, "Have you ever noticed how Egyptologists speak in circumstantial clauses?") We know, furthermore, that Joseph Smith was influenced by the Book of Mormon; he began his first history with a heading imitating the title page of the Book of Mormon succeeded by the following sentence, patterned after 1 Nephi 1:1:

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117 The normal fallacy is *post hoc ergo propter hoc*, the notion that if something happened after something else, it happened because of it. For example, the Kassites conquered the Babylonians after the Egyptians wrote the Pyramid Texts, but it would be fallacious to connect the two. Here, however, we are looking at the bizarre phenomenon of someone actually arguing that A happened before B, therefore A happened because of B.

118 Though some of the revelations in the 1833 Book of Commandments were given before or during the translation of the Book of Mormon, by no means all were. Ashment's samplings of linguistic material tend to date from after the translation of the Book of Mormon, running the methodological risk of having placed the cart before the horse.

119 Ashment considers this possibility on pp. 359–60, 370, but simply mocks it.

> I was born in the town of Charon in the <State> of Vermont North America on the twenty third day of December AD 1805 of goodly Parents who spared no pains to instructing me in <the> Christian religion[120]

Without documentation of Joseph Smith's style before the translation of the Book of Mormon, there is no way to determine whether shared locutions indicate that the Book of Mormon is influencing Joseph Smith or vice versa; only Book of Mormon locutions not used by Joseph Smith are significant. Thus, when Ashment (p. 377) can only find one example of the phrase "after that"[121] in the Book of Commandments (15:47 = D&C 18:43)—and none of the locutions "because that" or "before that"—although this particular revelation containing the phrase "after that" was given in June 1829 towards the end of the translation period, it is thus more likely that Book of Mormon syntax would influence Joseph Smith's syntax than the other way around.

How to Lie (with Statistics)

Besides employing a faulty method, Ashment has not been honest with the data. Careful comparison of John Tvedtnes's original contentions about Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon with Ashment's proposed data from the 1833 Book of Commandments shows that Ashment has not found the same linguistic phenomena at all. For example, comparison of Ashment's list of "Words Used in Unusual Ways" (pp. 379–80) with Tvedtnes's original list shows that none of Ashment's examples is the same as anything from Tvedtnes's list. Exactly what Ashment meant to prove by his list is uncertain; no explanation is included of what Ashment thinks is unusual about any of the phrases in question, or why any might be considered

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120 *PWJS* 4 = *PJS* 1:3. The impact of the Book of Mormon on LDS autobiography has been noted in Maureen Ursenbach Beecher, "Biography and Autobiography," in Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* 1:113. This is remarkable because "nowhere does the Book of Mormon suggest that it was written to be a pattern of historical writing;" Eric C. Olson, "The 'Perfect Pattern': The Book of Mormon as a Model for the Writing of Sacred History," *BYU Studies* 31/2 (Spring 1991): 17.

121 The argument that this is a Hebraism may be found in John A. Tvedtnes, "The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," in John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1991), 86–87.

Hebraisms, whereas Tvedtnes explicitly identified what was unusual with each example.

Another instance of Ashment's failure to isolate the correct linguistic phrase is more illustrative. Tvedtnes's twelfth example of a Hebraism[122] Ashment nearly correctly summarizes as where "the possessive pronoun is expressed by a genitival phrase" (p. 358). To make this absolutely clear, the linguistic pattern is noun + of + personal pronoun; e.g., "the words of me" (Jacob 5:2).[123] Ashment's list of proposed passages in the Book of Commandments stretches for over a page, but the vast majority of these are not cases of a possessive pronoun expressed by a genitival construction. "God," "Nephi," and "the adversary," to choose merely three examples, are simply not personal pronouns in any language. Ashment has only come up with four examples that match what he says he is finding (Book of Commandments 1:5; 9:17; 15:37, 38 = D&C 1:24; 10:67; 18:34 [with two examples]). In these four examples, however, the words "are," "not," and "but" are not nouns; thus he has no genuine example of the same phenomenon. In the space of a few pages, Ashment has confused nouns with pronouns, verbs, conjunctions, adverbs, and even adjectives ("hypothetical" on p. 366, "transliteration" for "transliterated" on p. 334). There would seem to be little point in continuing with the linguistic arguments of someone who does not appear to know his parts of speech, but there is some profit in pursuing our analysis further.

Ashment confronts a more difficult problem in Royal Skousen's arguments for Hebrew usage (pp. 360–63). Skousen identified examples of conditional clauses in the Book of Mormon where the apodosis is marked by "and" rather than "then."[124] For example, "and *if* ye shall ask with a sincere heart, with real intent, having faith in Christ, *and* he will manifest the truth of it unto you" (Moroni 10:4, 1830 edition).[125] Here, English would expect the word "then" rather than "and"; while the use of "and" is good Hebrew, it is impossible English. In attempting to refute this argument, Ashment not only follows the same fallacious method of looking for examples in the later Doctrine and Covenants, but he also subtly adopts another false

122 The relevant section is in ibid., 89–90.

123 The example is taken from ibid., 90.

124 Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/1 (Winter 1990): 42–43.

125 This example was cited in ibid., 43.

assumption which alters his data as well (pp. 362, 380–85). Ashment assumes that an inverted conditional is the same as a non-inverted one. Take, for example, Book of Commandments 12:3 (= D&C 14:7):

> *And* if you keep my commandments, and endure to the end, you shall have eternal life.

The inverted form of this would be:

> *And* you shall have eternal life, if you keep my commandments, and endure to the end.

This latter form Ashment takes as the equivalent of,

> If you keep my commandments, and endure to the end, *and* you shall have eternal life.

Note that, in the process of inverting, the conjunction "and" (italicized in the examples) has been transferred from its function of coordinating the conditional clauses to the new function of marking the apodosis. Ashment's assumption that an inverted conditional clause is identical to a noninverted conditional clause does not hold. Thus all examples of inverted conditional phrases in Ashment's data can be rejected as specious, reinterpreting the function of the conjunction from connecting the conditional clause to marking the apodosis. This removes all Ashment's examples from the Doctrine and Covenants save one. This example (D&C 5:27) runs as follows:

> But if he deny this,
> he will break the covenant which he has before covenanted with me,
> *and* behold he is condemned. (Book of Commandments 4:9 = D&C 5:27.)[126]

Ashment has clearly misunderstood the compound apodosis. If this were a real example it would read:

> But if he deny this,
> *and* he will break the covenant which he has before

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126 The text has not changed between the two editions, but the punctuation has. That given here is that of the 1833 Book of Commandments.

covenanted with me,
and behold he is condemned.

Since Ashment has no examples of this sentence construction in the Doctrine and Covenants, his statistic from the Doctrine and Covenants drops from 6% to 0% and the rest of his analysis becomes an exercise in statistical irrelevancy.[127]

Before leaving Ashment's argument, we should note two other methodological mistakes that Ashment has made. Ashment compares the statistics from the entire Book of Mormon with those of the book of Jeremiah, which he "included as a contemporary Hebrew control document" (p. 361),[128] informing us that the percentages should be the same (pp. 361–63). Here Ashment presents us with the fallacy of a sample with built-in bias.[129] "The Book of Jeremiah is partly in prose, partly in poetry, these being present in almost equal proportions."[130] The Book of Mormon is largely historical prose or exhortatory discourse.[131] Since poetry and prose are notorious for having different syntax, a syntactic comparison of this sort is virtually meaningless. Even if Jeremiah were the same genre of text, there is no reason why the percentage usage of any given stylistic variant should be the same between any two individuals. Finally, one suspects that a sample of thirty-eight conditional clauses in Jeremiah (p. 362) is not statistically significant, especially as compared to over ten times as many conditional clauses in the Book of Mormon.[132] One also wonders how much methodological sense it makes to count stylistic features in a translation of Jeremiah anyway.

This brings up an important bit of misleading legerdemain shared in both Ashment's and Metcalfe's essays. The appear-

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127 For the fallacy of irrelevant proof, see David Hackett Fisher, *Historians' Fallacies: Toward a Logic of Historical Thought* (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), 45–47.

128 We should note that Moroni and Jeremiah date 1000 years apart.

129 See Darrell Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics* (New York: Norton, 1954), 11–26.

130 John Bright, *Jeremiah* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1964), lx.

131 For poetry, see S. Kent Brown, "The Prophetic Laments of Samuel the Lamanite," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 163–80; chiasmus is a prose feature, see Baruch A. Levine, *Numbers 1–20*, vol. 4 of *The Anchor Bible* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 80–81.

132 See Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics*, 37–59.

ance given the reader is that all of the statistics and word counts given in the articles derive from careful examination of the 1833 Book of Commandments, the 1830 Book of Mormon, and—in Metcalfe's case—the Original and Printer's Manuscripts of the Book of Mormon. *Caveat Lector*! The reader should be warned that in many cases where the item is explicitly identified as coming from one of these sources, it seems to have been generated by the computerized scripture program.[133]

Ich Muß Es Anders Übersetzen[134]

Ashment uses some sleight of hand to discredit Brian Stubbs's argument about "long strings of subordinate clauses and verbal expressions" in the Book of Mormon.[135] Ashment argues that if this were true of *ancient* Hebrew then it would show up in the 1981 translation of portions of the Book of Mormon into *modern* Hebrew. Mark Twain has provided an amusing example of this sort of thing: When Madam Blanc translated his "Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County" into French, he promptly provided a skewed translation back into English. Where Twain's original read:

> The feller took the box again, and took another long, particular look, and give it back to Smiley, and says, very deliberate, "Well," he says, "I don't see no p'ints about that frog that's any better'n any other frog.

Madame Blanc's read:

> L'individu reprend la boîte, l'examine de nouveau longuement, et la rend à Smiley en disant d'un air délibéré:—Eh bien! je ne vois pas que cette grenouille ait rien de mieux qu'aucune grenouille.

which Twain retranslated as:

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133 Is it just coincidence that all of Metcalfe's statistical data supposedly coming from the 1830 Book of Mormon match those produced by the computerized scripture program?

134 Goethe, *Faust*, 1227.

135 The article in question, which Ashment never bothers to cite, is Brian Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," in Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179–81.

> The individual retook the box, it examined of new longly, and it rendered to Smiley in saying with an air deliberate:
>
> "Eh bien! I no saw not that that frog had nothing of better than each frog."[136]

This illustrates the follies of careless retroversion.[137] Ashment does not give sufficient reason why we should trust a translation of the Book of Mormon into colloquial modern Hebrew by a Jew who did not believe it, a translation which can be believed only insofar as it is translated correctly, a translation which was taken out of circulation for several reasons—one being its inaccuracy.[138] Can such a translation really give us any indication of what an original Hebrew text should read like? Given the disparity between the English text and the Modern Hebrew rendition, which is simpler to conclude: that the original Book of Mormon text is flawed, or that the translation into Modern Hebrew is flawed? Since the Modern Hebrew translation was not a conscientious attempt to render the Book of Mormon into a hypothetical ancient Hebrew idiom but into Modern Hebrew, we would expect it to resemble the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of the original text no more than we expect the Vellas translation of the Good News Version of the New Testament into modern Greek to resemble the grammar, vocabulary, and syntax of the original Koine.

Another example of Ashment's technique of irrelevant proof is his rewriting of the text of Genesis 1:1 in the manner of Words of Mormon 1:15–18 (pp. 365–66). Aside from being an exercise in sarcasm, Ashment's hypothetical example merely demonstrates that, given a sample of text, he can mimic the style; it does not show that "long strings of subordinate clauses and verbal expressions" are not characteristic of Hebrew.

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136 Mark Twain, "The Notorious Jumping Frog of Calaveras County," in *The Family Mark Twain* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1935), 1072, 1076, 1079, respectively. The name of the translator is given on p. 1163.

137 For appropriate cautions about retranslations, see McCarter, *Textual Criticism*, 68–70, cf. 66–67. Brent Metcalfe cites this book with approval in his introduction (p. ix n. 2) but there is no indication that he has read it; Ashment seems to have either not read or not understood it or he would not make this methodological mistake.

138 I am indebted to John Tvedtnes and Stephen Ricks for this information.

Incidentally, the Jewish Publication Society's version of Genesis 1:1–3 looks much more like the style Ashment claims is uncharacteristic of Hebrew:

> When God began to create heaven and earth—the earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water—God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light.[139]

The Original Language of the Book of Mormon

Admittedly some of the evidences for Hebraisms are inconclusive since they depend upon the assumptions from which the evidence is viewed. For example, long strings of clauses connected with "and" can be viewed either as reflecting underlying Hebrew syntax or merely as run-on sentences in English; long strings of "ands," while they might possibly provide confirmation of hypotheses, cannot of themselves decide the issue. But just because some of the tests cannot decide the issue by themselves does not mean that all of them are equally incapable, particularly since in many cases Ashment has simply not responded to the argument. We have already shown that, in many cases, closer scrutiny of Ashment's data shows that he has no case, either because he did not understand the argument, or because he made methodological mistakes or used insupportable assumptions. Though previous attempts to isolate possible Hebraisms in Book of Mormon language have often lacked the necessary control of checking against other possible languages such as English or Egyptian, even if we were to grant Ashment's fallacious methodology, Ashment's failure after diligent search yields four possible Hebraisms which decide the issue of the original language. (1) Extrapositional nouns and pronouns are characteristic of Hebrew[140] and of Egyptian,[141] but Ashment has produced

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139 Jewish Publication Society, *Tanakh: The Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 5748/1988), 3.

140 Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," 87–88.

141 These are called resumptive pronouns in Egyptian; the following relevant sections in Gardiner still hold: Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 114, 148, 150–51, 294–95, 299–300, §§146, 195, 200, 377, 383–84; cf. Jároslav Černý and Sarah Israelit Groll, *A Late Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed., vol. 4 of *Studia Pohl:*

no examples from Joseph Smith's English (p. 378). (2) Naming conventions characteristic of Hebrew[142] also occur in Egyptian (though they work a bit differently),[143] but Ashment has produced no examples from Joseph Smith's English (p. 378). (3) The use of noun + "of" + possessive pronoun reflects Hebrew syntax.[144] This feature is true of Old and Middle Egyptian but, beginning with Late Egyptian and later phases of the language—the forms of Egyptian contemporary with Lehi's departure from the Old World—it is true only of inalienables (such as parts of the body).[145] Therefore, since this phrase appears in the Book of Mormon with nouns that would seem not to be inalienables, the basic language of the Book of Mormon is probably not Egyptian. Ashment, for all his lengthy list, has not produced a single real example of this phenomenon in Joseph Smith's early writings. (4) The marking of the apodosis following the protasis in a conditional clause with "and" is true of Hebrew; it is not generally true of Egyptian.[146] Ashment also has no legitimate examples of the phenomenon from the early writings of Joseph Smith. From these proven examples, the question can be decided: The original language of the Book of Mormon is based on a dialect of Hebrew. With these tested Hebraisms in place,

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Series Maior (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1984), 486–91; Janet H. Johnson, *Thus Wrote ʿOnchsheshonqy: An Introductory Grammar of Demotic*, 2d ed., vol. 45 in *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1991), 69 ¶¶91, 93.

142 Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," 89.

143 See, for example, one of Hatshepsut's inscriptions from Deir el Bahri, in Kurt Sethe, *Urkunden der 18. Dynastie*, vol. 4 of *Urkunden des ägyptischen Altertums*, usually cited as *Urk.* IV (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1906), 221.6–7: "Words said by Amun, lord of the thrones of the two lands, to her: Hatshepsut united with Amun is indeed the name of this daughter which I have placed on your body." cf. 161.

144 Tvedtnes, "Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon," 89–90.

145 See *inter alia* Johnson, *Thus Wrote ʿOnchsheshonqy*, 22; Černý and Groll, *Late Egyptian Grammar*, 31.

146 I know of no indication of *ḥnʿ*, *irm*, *r-wḥ*, *auō*, or *mᵉn* being used in any fashion even remotely close to this. The conjunctive is used in such constructions only rarely in Late Egyptian and Demotic; see I. E. S. Edwards, "A Rare Use of the Conjunctive," *Mitteilungen des deutschen Archäologischen Instituts Abteilung Kairo* 37 (1981): 135–37 (the comparison with Hebrew is explicit); a Demotic example seems to be given in Janet H. Johnson, *The Demotic Verbal System*, vol. 38 of *Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1976), 289, E519.

the other Hebraisms can also stand—even in the face of Ashment's fallacious objections.

With the original tongue of the Nephites being Hebrew, what is Egyptian must be the script. A Hebrew dialect written in Egyptian script fulfills all the conditions set forth by both the Book of Mormon and Joseph Smith for the "language" of the Book of Mormon. This also renders any attempt to discredit the Book of Mormon from the book of Abraham specious since such attempts would necessarily assume that the Book of Abraham was also written in Hebrew in Egyptian characters—and neither critic nor defender has seriously advanced this hypothesis.

Ashment pooh-poohs the idea advanced by Stephen Ricks that Papyrus Amherst 63 provides a parallel to this situation since it represents a Semitic language in an Egyptian script (pp. 351–54).[147] Ashment argues that the text on the papyrus is

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147 Ashment's bibliography of this text is somewhat lacking, so the following is a list in chronological order: Raymond A. Bowman, "An Aramaic Religious Text in Demotic Script," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 3 (1944): 219–31; Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesselius, "An Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C.," *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 39/5–6 (1982): 501–9; Charles F. Nims and Richard Steiner, "A Paganized Version of Psalm 20:2–6 from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 103 (1983): 261–74; K. A. D. Smelik, "Een aramese parallel voor psalm 20," *Nederlands Theologisch Tijdschrift* 37/2 (April 1983): 89–103; Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "You Can't Offer your Sacrifice and Eat it Too: A Polemical Poem from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 43/2 (April 1984): 89–114; [Anonymous], "Bible's Psalm 20 Adapted for Pagan Use," *Biblical Archaeology Review* 11/1 (January/February 1985): 20–24; Richard C. Steiner and Charles F. Nims, "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin: A Tale of Two Brothers from the Aramaic Text in Demotic Script," *Revue Biblique* 92/1 (1985): 60–81; Sven P. Vleeming and Jan W. Wesselius, "Betel the Saviour. Papyrus Amherst 63, col. 7:1–18," *Ex Oriente Lux* 28 (1983–84): 110–40; K. A. D. Smelik, "The Origin of Psalm 20," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 31 (1985): 75–81; Karl-Theodor Zauzich, "Der Gott des aramäisch-demotischen Papyrus Amherst 63," *Göttinger Miszellen* 85 (1985): 89–90; Karl-Theodor Zauzich, "Abrakadabra oder Ägyptisch? Versuch über einen Zauberspruch," *Enchoria* 13 (1985): 119–32; S. P. Vleeming and J. W. Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63. Essays on the Aramaic Texts in Aramaic/Demotic Papyrus Amherst 63*, volume I (Amsterdam: Juda Palache Instituut, 1985); Moshe Weinfeld, "The Pagan Version of Psalm 20:2–8—Vicissitudes of a Psalmodic Creation in Israel and Its Neighbors" (in Hebrew), *Eretz Israel* 18 (1985): 130–40, 70* (English summary); Moshe Weinfeld, "The Aramaic Text (in Demotic Script) from Egypt on Sacrifice and Morality and Its Relationship to

actually more lengthy in Egyptian script than it would be in the original language. True, "the papyrus adds Egyptian determinatives to many words" (p. 353) but the most common of these, the determinative of a man with his hand to his mouth,[148] being thin in Demotic anyway,[149] adds little to word length.[150] Ashment ignores the presence of biliterals which shorten the

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Biblical Texts" (in Hebrew), *Shnaton* 9 (1985): 179–89, XVIII (English summary); Stanislav Segert, "Preliminary Notes on the Structure of the Aramaic Poems in the Papyrus Amherst 63," *Ugarit-Forschungen* 18 (1986): 271–99; E. Lipínski, review of Vleeming and Wesselius, *Studies in Papyrus Amherst 63*, in *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 44/3–4 (May–July 1987): 413–14; Frederick M. Fales, "La Tradizione Assira ad Elefantina d'Egitto," *Dialoghi di Archeologia* III 5/2 (1987): 63–70; Oswald Loretz, *Die Königspsalmen: Die altorientalisch-kanaanäische Königstraditions in jüdischer Sicht, Teil 1*, vol. 6 of *Ugaritisch-biblische Literature* (Münster: UGARIT, 1988), 15–54; Ingo Kottsieper, "Papyrus Amherst 63—Einführung, Text und Übersetzung von 12,11–19," in Loretz, *Königspsalmen*, 55–75; Ingo Kottsieper, "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63," *Zeitschrift für altestamentlichen Wissenschaft* 100/2 (1988): 217–44; J. A. Emerton, "Book List," *Vetus Testamentum* 38/2 (1988): 251–52; Ziony Zevit, "The Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 110/2 (1990): 213–28; Richard C. Steiner, "The Aramaic Text in Demotic Script: The Liturgy of a New Year's Festival Imported from Bethel to Syene by Exiles from Rash," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111/2 (1991): 362–63; Richard C. Steiner, "Northwest Semitic Incantations in an Egyptian Medical Papyrus of the Fourteenth Century B.C.E.," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 51/3 (July 1992): 191–200. Richard Steiner is in the process of preparing a full edition of the entire papyrus. Ashment knows only of those articles by both Steiner and Nims. For discussion relating this papyrus to the Book of Mormon, see Stephen D. Ricks, "Language and Script in the Book of Mormon," *Insights: An Ancient Window* (March 1992): 2; Daniel C. Peterson, "Chattanooga Cheapshot, or The Gall of Bitterness," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 43–45; Louis Midgley, "Playing with Half a Decker: The Countercult Religious Tradition Confronts the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 164–65; William J. Hamblin, review of Jerald and Sandra Tanner, *Archaeology and the Book of Mormon*, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 264–65.

148 Steiner and Nims, "You Can't Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat it too," 91; Steiner and Nims, "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin," 66.

149 Johnson, *Thus Wrote ʿOnchsheshonqy*, 5.

150 There is no reason to suppose that the promiscuous alephs of Papyrus Amherst 63 would be present in the Book of Mormon. Kottsieper, "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63," 218–19, plausibly argues that these are *matres lectiones*. Se especially Zauzich, "Abrakadabra oder Ägyptisch?" 127.

text.[151] He claims that "Ricks downplays the fact that the papyrus is a paganized adaptation of Psalm 20:2–6" (p. 352). In fact, as Karl-Theodor Zauzich has argued, Nims and Steiner, Ashment's sole source of information, have misread the Demotic of the crucial name: "The god of Pap. Amherst 63 is by no means Horus or any other hitherto unknown divinity, but precisely he who should have been expected by the entire context: Jehovah."[152] Ingo Kottsieper argues that it is to be read *ʾel*, "God."[153] Thus, the version of Psalm 20:2–6 in Papyrus Amherst 63 may not be pagan at all.[154] As several scholars have shown, the discrepancy between the phonemic inventories of Aramaic and Egyptian creates precisely that ambiguity that makes the text difficult to understand[155] and which would result in an adaptation "according to our manner of speech" (Mormon 9:32) if it were used as a scribal tradition over an extended period of time. The date to which Ashment so firmly holds (p. 351) is just another disputed aspect of the document.[156] Ashment has unintentionally misrepresented and misunderstood this document. Papyrus Amherst 63 cannot be in the language of the Book of Mormon since the underlying tongue is Aramaic and

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151 Steiner and Nims, "You Can't Offer Your Sacrifice and Eat it too," 90; Vleeming and Wesselius, "Betel the Saviour," 113; Vleeming and Wesselius, "Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C.," 503; Steiner and Nims, "Ashurbanipal and Shamash-shum-ukin," 65; Zauzich, "Abrakadabra oder Ägyptisch?" 127.

152 Zauzich, "Der Gott des aramäisch-demotischen Papyrus Amherst 63," 89–90. I have normalized Zauzich's German "Jahve" in my translation. Additionally Zauzich notes that Vleeming and Wesselius, whom Ashment does not cite, also misread the Demotic. Zevit, "Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20," 217–18 disputes this, but his argument is unconvincing since he cannot read Demotic.

153 Kottsieper, "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63," 225–26. For Kottsieper's arguments to hold, however, we must assume that the scribe spoke a Fayyumic dialect.

154 There are four proposed readings for the key word, *Hr* (Nims and Steiner), *ḥr* (Zevit), *Yhwh* (Zauzich), and *ʾel* (Kottsieper). The reading of the name has not been decided definitively because all proposed readings have problems with either script, phonetics, or propose hitherto unkown deities.

155 Vleeming and Wesselius, "Aramaic Hymn from the Fourth Century B.C.," 505–6; Kottsieper, "Anmerkungen zu Pap. Amherst 63," 220; Kottsieper, "Papyrus Amherst 63," 63.

156 Vleeming and Wesselius, "Betel the Saviour," 111–12; Zevit, "Common Origin of the Aramaicized Prayer to Horus and of Psalm 20," 214; Zauzich, "Abrakadabra oder Ägyptisch?" 130.

not Hebrew, but, like the Book of Mormon, it contains a scriptural text in a Northwest Semitic tongue written in an Egyptian script.[157]

Perhaps it would be appropriate to mention Ashment's use of pictures and drawings. One thing Egyptologists have learned from the Egyptians is the use of pictures to illustrate the text. Sometimes illustrations can enhance one's argument. In Ashment's case, perhaps he should have left them out. Figure 8 (p. 351) is a poor reproduction of Papyrus Amherst 63. (Figures 2–4, pp. 335–36, are also poor reproductions). Figure 10 (p. 353) is supposed to be a transliteration of Figure 8, but it leaves out part of the transliteration and follows Nims and Steiner even when mistaken. It is also deceptive in that Ashment uses three characters to represent what in Demotic is little more than a vertical line. For good measure, Ashment leaves line numbers and vowels in the left-hand column but deletes them from the right-hand column. This lends an unjustifiable lopsidedness to the image so that Ashment's claim that "the text in Egyptian characters is quite a bit longer than its Aramaic equivalent would have been (Fig. 10)" (p. 353) would look credible to anyone who did not notice how Ashment has distorted his picture.[158]

A Bible! A Bible! Have We Got a Bible?

Turns of phrase which to a believer indicate individual style within the Book of Mormon (pp. 366–70), to an unbeliever are proof that "Joseph Smith plagiarized from the KJV [King James Version]" (p. 130 n. 7; cf pp. 131–32) and repeatedly used a phrase from his Bible reading "while it was fresh in his mind" (p. 368). The hypothesis which Ashment (pp. 366–72), Metcalfe (pp. 421), Larson (pp. 115–56), and Wright build up is that Joseph Smith dictated the Book of Mormon contemporaneously with his regular Bible reading. This hypothesis has its problems. (1) the erratic reading order—Isaiah, Hebrews, Matthew, John, Habakkuk, Micah, Isaiah, Malachi, 1

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157 See also Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," 61.

158 These sorts of fallacies are dealt with in Huff, *How to Lie with Statistics*, 60–73. As any papyrologist knows, spacing arguments cannot be done from transcriptions or transliterations but only from careful examination of photographs or of the actual papyrus. Note especially the comments in Bentley Layton, "Editorial Method," in Bentley Layton, ed., *Nag Hammadi Codex II, 2–7*, 2 vols. (Leiden: Brill, 1989), 1:29–33.

Corinthians, Revelation, Isaiah, Romans—needs an explanation.[159] (2) The hypothesis ignores the accounts of the scribes, which claim that Joseph "had neither manuscript nor book to read from. . . . If he had anything of the kind he could not have concealed it from me."[160] (3) As far as his contemporaries were concerned, "Smith was ignorant of the Bible."[161] His mother, Lucy Mack Smith, described him as "a boy, eighteen years of age, who had never read the Bible through in his life: he seemed much less inclined to the perusal of books than any of the rest of our children, but far more given to meditation and deep study."[162] Even if we assume that "Joseph's knowledge of the Bible, including the Old Testament, was already formidable by the time he began translating the Book of Mormon,"[163] at age twenty-four, his knowledge was either recently acquired or not acquired by reading. (4) How do we know Joseph Smith even owned a Bible when he translated the Book of Mormon? The arguments of Wright and Larson explicitly require that "Joseph Smith decided simply to copy from the KJV, to which he had immediate access" (p. 131). Granted that Joseph's parents owned a Bible when he was growing up, why would the family Bible go with Joseph when he left home to set up his own household in Harmony, Pennsylvania? The translation period was one of marked poverty when Joseph sometimes could not even afford paper or food.[164] Joseph's own Bible was pur-

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159 See Nibley, "A Look at Jerald and Sandra Tanner's *Covering Up the Black Hole in the Book of Mormon*," 287–88.

160 Emma Smith, *Saints Herald* 26 (1 October 1879): 289; cf. Skousen, "Toward a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," 51; see also Stephen D. Ricks, "Death Knell or Tinkling Cymbals?" *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 238 n. 4. Ricks notes, "I have not made up my mind whether Joseph had the King James Version to hand when he was translating the Book of Mormon. Some Latter-day Saint scholars assume that he did have one. However, the witnesses to the translation process never mention anything about an English translation being present while the book was being translated." And indeed, Ricks cites Emma Smith to the contrary.

161 M. J. Hubble interview of David Whitmer, 13 November 1886, in Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin, 1991), 211.

162 Smith, *History of Joseph Smith*, 82 = Smith, *Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 92.

163 Ricks, "Death Knell or Tinkling Cymbals?" 239.

164 For the poverty during the translation process, see Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 95-100. Donald L. Enders, "The Joseph

chased from Egbert B. Grandin on 8 October 1829, thus after the translation of the Book of Mormon and during its printing.[165] If Metcalfe is correct in arguing that the portion of the Book of Mormon from Mosiah to Ether was all translated in Harmony (p. 413), then Wright and Larson should explain where the Bible comes from that they assume Joseph used but which Emma explicitly denies he used. Even after Joseph Smith moved to Fayette, David Whitmer testified that "Smith was ignorant of the Bible[;] that when translating he first came to where Jerusalem was spoken of as a 'Walled City' he stopped until they *got* a Bible & showed him where the fact was recorded."[166] Metcalfe cites this account (pp. 400–401) but overlooks the obvious implications: If they had to go get a Bible, they did not have one at hand when they were doing the translation, even in Fayette, New York. (5) A well-attested aspect of the translation of the Book of Mormon is that when Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon, he "would hold the interpreters to his eyes and cover his face with a hat, excluding all light."[167] While to a believer this aspect is not problematic, one must wonder how those who favor naturalistic explanations would explain how Joseph Smith can read a Bible with his face buried in a hat excluding all light? This is completely overlooked in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*.

So Ashment's proposed test to determine whether the language of the Book of Mormon is that of Joseph Smith breaks down on a number of points. (1) It is anachronistic, assuming

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Smith, Sr., Family: Farmers of the Genesee," in Susan Easton Black and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds., *Joseph Smith the Prophet, The Man* (Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1993), 213–25, demonstrates quantitatively that the Smiths were neither poor nor lazy during the period from late 1819 to 1825. Lucy Mack Smith documents (*Biographical Sketches of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 102–12 = *History of Joseph Smith*, 91–99) how their enemies cheated them out of their property in a time of poverty. (I would like to thank Daniel C. Peterson for drawing my attention to the article by Enders.)

165 Matthews, "*A Plainer Translation*," 26. This was while the Book of Mormon was being printed and likely Oliver bought the Bible for Joseph, who was not in town.

166 M. J. Hubble interview of David Whitmer, 13 November 1886, in Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews*, 211, emphasis added.

167 Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews*, 62, cf. 3–4, 12, 52–56, 72, 108, 123–24, 157–58, 175, 230.

that Joseph Smith's language use after the translation of the Book of Mormon (as late as 1833 in some cases) reflects Smith's language during the translation process in 1829. (2) In searching for his evidence in the 1833 Book of Commandments he has produced large amounts of specious data because he is not isolating the same linguistic phenomena that have been identified as Hebraisms by others. As a result, (3) he cannot come up with any examples of linguistic phenomena in certain categories and thus cannot demonstrate that they are part of Joseph Smith's language. (4) He assumes that Joseph Smith used a Bible in translating the Book of Mormon, even though there is no evidence that there was a Bible present during the translation. The eyewitnesses to the translation process deny that a Bible was used, and there is circumstantial evidence that Joseph may not have owned a Bible at that time.

The Name Game

To deal with Book of Mormon onomastica, Ashment ignores the methodological work of the past, particularly that of Paul Hoskisson.[168] Instead, he produces a four-page chart (pp. 347–50) listing his analysis of 135[169] of the 188 nonbiblical names found in the Book of Mormon into a process which he calls "affixation" (p. 347, the proper term is "agglutination"). Joseph Smith—so Ashment would have us believe—simply used the formula (prefix) + Stem + (({e/i})an) + ((h/n/t){a/e/o}r) + ((C){a/e/i/o/u}{m/n}) + ((C)i) + (((C)a)h(V)) + (g{a/o}th) + (anomalous)[170] and (*voilá*!) produced all the nonbiblical Book of Mormon names. According to Anthony Hutchinson, anyone

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168 Paul Y. Hoskisson, "An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon," in John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, eds., *By Study and Also By Faith*, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 2:126–35; see also Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Book of Mormon Names," in Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:186–87.

169 Ashment claims that there are 136 names (p. 347), but he has included Limhah twice on his chart (p. 349).

170 The notation, which is Ashment's, is a bit convoluted, so I will provide a key. Ashment does not.

( ) Parentheses enclose optional elements.
{ } Braces enclose options which I have separated by slashes (/).
C A capital C represents any consonant.
V A capital V represents any vowel.

can do this with the greatest of ease (p. 9). Well, actually fifty-three names are unaccounted for, and several of the names included look as though they have been forced onto a procrustean bed. We are asked to believe that the name "Ahah" is both the only name with the stem "aha" and the only name with the suffix "h"? (According to Ashment "ah" is an attested suffix. But when the suffix is the same as the stem, i.e. "Ah-ah," things start looking suspicious.) We are also asked to believe that the name "Seezoram" is both the only name with the prefix "see" and the only name with the stem "zo." Why is "pa" a prefix in "Pacumen" but a stem in "Pagag" and "Pahoran"? Why is "kish" a prefix in "Kishkumen" yet a stem in "Akish" and "Riplakish"? What sort of method is this? Even Ashment's name can fit this scheme: "Ash" is the stem, "men" fits the pattern "(C){a/e/i/o/u}{m/n}" and "t" is an anomalous ending. Likewise, Ashment's co-contributor Stan Larson's last name fits a similar pattern: "Lar" is the stem and "son" fits the same (C)V{m/n} pattern. The same applies to "Hutchin-son." Or, better, take the attested Book of Mormon stem "Math," add (Ø)en, and finish with an anomalous "y" and we have "Matheny." Are we to believe that "Ashment," "Hutchinson," "Larson," and "Matheny" are Book-of-Mormon-type names that could have been concocted by Joseph Smith?[171] The name of two Pharaohs of the Nineteenth Dynasty is Seti, which can be broken into a stem attested in Ashment's list "se" (as in "Senum") and an attested suffix "ti" (Man-ti, Lehon-ti); shall we then suggest that "it is difficult to justify an ancient origin" for the name of the father of Ramses II (p. 347)? If it is really legitimate to sneak in additional name elements (e.g. the "par" in "Antiparah" or the "li" in "Ripliancum"), what is to prevent any number of fudge factors from being added? The lack of rigor on Ashment's part would seem to indicate that he was anxious—too anxious really—to show as many names fitting a modern formula as possible. Things look even more suspicious when Ashment lumps "malek," "malick," "mulek," and "mulok" under the same stem, since none of the vowels match (p. 350), even though he has classified "am," "em," and "om" as separate stems. Are the vowels important in this system or not? If only

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171 Almost *any* name can fit the Stem + anomalous that Ashment claims handles the names "Anti-pas," "Gil-no," "Man-ti" (probably misclassified), "Ne-as," "Pach-us," "Pa-gag," and "Seb-us." Witness: "Char-les," "Kun-ich," "Met-calfe," "Thom-as," and "Vog-el."

the consonants are important for the stem in Ashment's system we are left with a stem of "mlk" (which also happens to be an ancient Hebrew root).[172] If the vowels can be ignored in the roots (malek/mulok, ze/zo), and in the suffixes (ar/er/or, am/em/om/um), do the vowels matter at all? (Metcalfe [p. 432 n. 46] argues that they do not.) This is perilously close to admitting that Book of Mormon names may share similarities to Egyptian and Hebrew names, and that the language in which the Book of Mormon was written may have been basically consonantal like Hebrew and Egyptian.

Patterns do exist in the names in the Book of Mormon, but such would be expected if the Book of Mormon were an ancient book. Ashment's list has too many exceptions. If we continually threw out all the unique occurrences and exceptions from the table,[173] Ashment's corpus would dwindle to a mere forty-three names, but it would also be a more consistent corpus.[174] This corpus, furthermore, would have a simpler analysis than Ashment's formulae. For example, if "Nephi" truly followed the pattern Ashment sets up for it as Stem + (C)i (p. 350), then we might ask why the only "-phi"s to appear on his entire chart are

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172 N. B. Amalek, Amalickihah, and Amulek do not have to be built off Hebrew "mlk" to be genuine ancient names.

173 Otherwise unattested are the suffixes "-as" in "Neas," "-dah" in "Onidah," "-di" in "Gadiandi," "-dom" in "Sidom," "-er" in "Emer" "-gah" in "Gilgah," "-hu" in "Amnihu," "-la" in "Zarahemla," "-lah" in "Riplah," "-mon" in "Mormon" "-ner" in "Omner," "-pus" in "Antipus," "-r" in "Coriantumr," "-rem" in "Sherem," "-rin" in "Zerin," and "-tor" in "Coriantor," as well as the prefixes "kish-" in "Kishkumen," and "pa-" in "Pacumeni." Fudge factors include the doubled suffixes "-on-um" in "Antionum," "-am-an" in "Helaman," and the unexplained stem additions in "Antiparah," "Gadiomnah," "Ripliancum." Once these are removed we have a whole series of unique stems Aha-, Ant-, Arch-, Co-, Com-, Cure-, Em-, Eth-, Gad-, Gazel-, Gil-, Gim-, Hel-, Him, Irr-, Jacobu-, Jac-, Jar-, Jash-, Jene-, Kim-, Kish-, Leh-, Lur-, Mah-, Man-, Midd-, Mig-, Min-, Mo-, Mos-, Na-, O-, Om-, Or-, Paanch-, Pach-, Pa-, Rabba-, Sean-, Seb-, Se-, She-, Shi-, Shimni-, Si-, Tean-, Teom-, Zara-, Zem-. This leaves the suffixes -an, -er, -lom, -no, -nor, -ram, -ti, and -um unattested. Finally, the stems On-, and Ze- are left without attestation.

174 These would be: Abinadi, Abinadom, Amaron, Amoron, Ammaron, Ammoron, Antion, Antionah, Corianton, Coriantum, Corihor, Korihor, Corom, Cumeni, Cumenihah, Kumenonhi, Cumom, Cumorah, Ezrom, Zeezrom, Giddonah, Giddgiddonah, Giddgiddoni, Giddianhi, Lamah, Lamoni, Limhah, Limhi, Mathoni, Mathonihah, Morianton, Moriantum, Moron, Moroni, Moronihah, Nehor, Nephi, Nephihah, Zenephi, Shemlon, Shemron, Shiblon, Shibron.

in names built off the stem "ne," leading us to suspect that the system would work better if the stem were "neph," or even "nep" since that would leave the attested suffixes "-i" or "-hi." But then, if the stem is "nep" or "neph" we must ask why this stem is always attested with the same suffixes. It would appear under Ashment's system that the real stem is "nephi" to which the prefix "ze-" or the suffix "-hah" can be added. This would presumably be unacceptable to Ashment's mind because "nephi" has been shown to be a genuine ancient stem[175] and, thus, it would no longer be "difficult to justify an ancient origin" for it (p. 347). He would fault recent work showing that "Nephi is an attested Syro-Palestinian Semitic form of an attested Egyptian man's name dating from the Late Period in Egypt,"[176] by contending that it "overrides Smith's carefully worked-out pronunciation."[177] What "carefully worked out pronunciation"? We have seen, and even Ashment admits (p. 360), that Joseph spelled out the names. Perhaps it is worth noting again Emma Smith's statement that "Even the word Sarah [*sic*] he [Joseph Smith] could not pronounce at first, but had to spell it, and I would pronounce it for him."[178] Ashment's lengthy charts—for whatever worth they might have in showing patterns of spelling in Book of Mormon names—do not demonstrate that Joseph Smith had a "carefully worked-out pronunciation" for Book of Mormon names (contra p. 360 n. 38). Ashment never provides any basis for refuting the long-established fact that Joseph Smith spelled out the names in the Book of Mormon the first time he

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175 John Gee, "A Note on the Name *Nephi*," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1/1 (1992): 189–91.

176 Ibid., 189–91.

177 Curiously, one would normally anticipate that the standard anti-Mormon response would be that Joseph Smith got the name "Nephi" from the King James Version of 2 Maccabees 1:36 where the name *Nephthar* (variant, *Nephtha(e)i*) is rendered "Nephi"; see John Gee, "A Note on the Name Nephi," *Insights: An Ancient Window* (November 1992): 2, n. 1. Of course, the problem with this is twofold. (1) We have no evidence that Joseph Smith had ever read any of the apocrypha before he took up the question of translating them on 9 March 1833; see *HC* 1:331–2; D&C 91:1–6; Lyndon Cook, *The Revelations of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 193; Matthews, *Joseph Smith's Translation of the Bible*, 37. (2) Even if the word "Nephi" appears once in the King James Version of the apocrypha, it still does not prevent it from deriving from the proper milieu. Either way, it is an ancient name.

178 Emma Smith, in Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," 53.

came across them. The pronunciations have always been purely conventional. Thus the pronunciation of Nephi in "the 1869 edition of the Book of Mormon in the phonetic Deseret script" is largely irrelevant to the issue.[179] Contrary to Ashment's claims, the article he attacks only suggested a pronunciation after establishing what the likely ancient form of the name was; it did not go from pronunciation to ancient form. Thus Ashment states that the article "concludes misleadingly" (360 n. 38) after he has misleadingly reversed the argument of the article.

In order for Ashment's system to be persuasive as a nineteenth-century origin for the names in the Book of Mormon, it should have accounted neatly for most of the nonbiblical names in the Book of Mormon, been simple and straight-forward enough so that someone could easily memorize the formula to use it. When Ashment's system is long, complex, and ambiguous (can the reader even remember it without looking back?), requires more exceptions than rules, can rigorously account for less than a quarter of the names in the Book of Mormon, and can produce his own name as a Book of Mormon name, we are compelled to doubt the value of his system.

"News, Old News, and Such News as You Never Heard of"[180]

Metcalfe boasts about his volume's "cutting-edge research" (p. xi). It is difficult to find any such thing in the book. Ashment, for example, is out-of-date in several disciplines, not the least of which is Egyptian grammar. For example, he cites the following passage from the "Introduction" to Gardiner's grammar: "No less salient a characteristic of the [Egyptian] language is its **concision**; the phrases and sentences are brief and to the point. Involved constructions and lengthy periods are rare, though such are found in some legal documents."[181] Ashment dates this text to 1969. Actually the third edition of Gardiner came out in 1957, not 1969. (Ashment seems to have a 1969

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179 Had Ashment read Gee, "Note on the Name *Nephi*," 191 n. 15, he would have seen that I traced the current pronunciation of the name back to at least 1837, a full thirty-two years before his evidence.

180 William Shakespeare, *The Taming of the Shrew*, act 3, scene 2, line 31.

181 Alan H. Gardiner, *Egyptian Grammar*, 3d ed. (Oxford: Griffith Institute, 1957), 4.

printing.) But the third edition differed from the second edition (1950) principally in a list of additions and corrections appended to the Preface; Gardiner saved time, pains, and cost "by abandoning any attempt to bring up to date" the Introduction.[182] In turn the Second Edition is essentially the same as the first edition of 1927.[183] Gardiner stated that he was "unable to persuade [himself] of the necessity of abandoning any of [his] main positions, particularly in respect to the theory of the verb," and specifically in respect to the work of Polotsky.[184] Yet it is precisely Polotsky's work that has shown how complex Egyptian sentences are. To take one of Polotsky's examples:

> I have descended into my tomb, in the beautiful tomb-equipment which I had acquired with my own arms, my house weeping, my town following me, my offspring ...-ing after me without exception.[185]

More recently, Fredrich Junge supplies the following example:

> "Look here, we have made it, reaching home, the mallet being seized, the mooring post staked and finally the prow-rope placed on land; by having given praise, thanked god and everyone's now embracing his fellow."[186]

The lengthy complex sentence was a characteristic of Egyptian in all phases of the language, culminating in the long-winded Coptic monk Shenoute and his school.[187]

Ashment is correct when he points out that the Egyp tian monster ᶜAmmut "does not specifically represent chaos"

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182 Ibid., vii.

183 Ibid., ix.

184 Ibid., x.

185 H. J. Polotsky, "Egyptian Tenses," in H. J. Polotsky, *Collected Papers* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971), 84. The article was originally published in *The Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, Proceedings* 2/5 (1965).

186 Friedrich Junge, *"Emphasis" and Sentential Meaning in Middle Egyptian*, 4th series, vol. 20 of *Göttinger Orientforschungen* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1989), 110.

187 On Shenoute's complex, long-winded style, see Ariel Shisha-Halevy, *Coptic Grammatical Categories*, vol. 53 of *Analecta Orientalia* (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1986), 4–5. It has more recently been noted that Shenoute's style is not unique to him. See Stephen L. Emmel, "Shenoute's Literary Corpus," Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, 1993, chapter 2.

(p. 371). I have also pointed out this error.[188] But Ashment errs when he claims that the comparison of the term "second death" in the Book of Mormon with Egyptian concepts is "presentistic, eisegetically interpreting modern Mormon hermeneutics back into Egyptian beliefs" (p. 371). Alma says that when the "second death" comes "is the time when their torments shall be as a lake of fire and brimstone, whose flames ascendeth up for ever and ever" (Alma 12:16–17). Erik Hornung, a leading expert on Egyptian religion, gives the following description for comparison:

> Hostile creatures whose evil deeds have led to their conviction at the Judgment of the Dead are bound, decapitated, and set on fire; their hearts are torn from their bodies, their heads placed at their own feet. The destruction of the body also marks the destruction of the *ba*; it effaces the shadows of the condemned, and relegates their names to oblivion, to nonexistence. One scene in the Book of Gates shows a tremendous serpent, "the fiery one," breathing on bound sinners before it and setting them on fire; we meet similar fire-breathing snakes with practically every step in the Egyptian underworld. Other scenes depict fire-filled pits or the ominous Lake of Fire. The condemned experience the lake's red water as a burning liquid that brings the total destruction of both body and soul.[189]

"By Every Wind of Doctrine"

Ashment does not present the latest discussions of biblical scholarship. He informs us that "Deuteronomy, originally written ca. 620 B.C.E., was the core around which the various narratives were collected which eventually became 'the five books of Moses.' These were composed after the Babylonian captivity, ca. 400 B.C.E." (p. 332 n. 8). Even if we were to accept all the assumptions of secular biblical criticism, we would still have to reject this statement as it stands because it is inaccurate. To select

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188 See Gee, review of Ludlow, ed., *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 181.

189 Erik Hornung, *Idea Into Image: Essays on Ancient Egyptian Thought*, trans. Elizabeth Bredeck (New York: Timken, 1992), 99–100.

two sources from the list of works that David Wright, Ashment's fellow contributor, has commended for becoming acquainted with "critical scholarship,"[190] we note the following: The expert on Leviticus, Jacob Milgrom, tells us that "P [basically Leviticus 1–16]—not just its teachings but its very texts—was composed not later than the middle of the eighth century (ca. 750 B.C.E.)."[191] Milgrom also discusses I. Knohl's doctoral dissertation on Leviticus: "What can unquestionably be accepted from Knohl's study is that H [basically Leviticus 17–26] arose from the socioeconomic crisis at the end of the eighth century."[192] Thus Ashment says that Leviticus was written about 400 B.C. and Milgrom says it was written between 750 and 700 B.C., 300–350 years earlier. Dealing specifically with the question of dating the book of Deuteronomy to the reign of Josiah, Moshe Weinfeld says that "in recent years, no one has supported this view," preferring the reign of Hezekiah.[193] In fact,

> The very purport of posing such a question concerning the time of the composition of the book is *out of place from a methodological viewpoint.* The concept of "composition of a book" is meaningless with regard to the Israel of ancient times and, indeed, with reference to the entire eastern world. Today when we speak of a book, we mean a composition written by a certain person at a specific place and time; every line is impressed with the personality of the author and the period and milieu in which it was written. Such was not the case in Israel or in the ancient East. . . . The author of ancient times was generally a collector and compiler of traditions rather

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190 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 38 n. 57.

191 Milgrom, *Leviticus 1–16*, vol. 3 of *The Anchor Bible* (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1991), 28. I have simplified the extent of P in my editorial insertion—it is both more and less than that—but not drastically so. "Most of P in Leviticus is found in chaps. 1–16, with only a few interpolations attributable to H" (ibid., 1).

192 Ibid., 28. Again, the extent of H has been simplified, but not drastically so: "The reverse situation obtains in the latter part of Leviticus (chaps. 17–27), most of which stems from the school of H with only a few verses (mainly in chap. 23) ascribable to P." (ibid., 1, cf. 13).

193 Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy 1–11* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1991), 83.

> than a creator of literature, and was certainly not an author in the modern sense of the term.[194]

Thus, "it is beyond doubt that the book of Deuteronomy contains ancient laws from the period of the Judges or even from the time of Moses. But it also contains an element from the period of Hezekiah-Josiah."[195] Wright has claimed that "to require putting aside these legitimate questions, the critical method, and the clear conclusions and evidence generated thereby is to require setting aside our search for and claims about being interested in historical and even religious truth."[196] Which clear conclusions? Wright has presented us with a bait-and-switch tactic where the truth depends on whichever way the prevailing scholarly wind is blowing. Do we follow Milgrom and say that Leviticus dates to the seventh and eighth centuries, or Ashment and say that it dates to the fourth or third centuries, or do we follow Weinfeld and say that to ask such a question is methodologically wrong?

This brings us to an interesting paradox. David Wright argues for the use of a single method, but wishes to encompass a plurality of viewpoints resulting from the use of this method—except, of course, the viewpoints of F.A.R.M.S. (pp. 165–66 n. 2)[197] or of traditional believers.[198]

Ashment's criticism of one of Nibley's arguments shows the potential danger of relying too heavily on secular scholarship (p. 344). When Nibley made his arguments connecting Paankh and Herihor with Paanchi and Corihor, he was relying on the scholarship available in 1952 and 1964. During the 1960s K. A. Kitchen began seriously reexamining the evidence of the Third Intermediate Period, and his careful gathering and analyzing the sources has rewritten the history of this period.[199] But as this review is being written, other Egyptologists are rewriting por-

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194 Ibid., emphasis added.

195 Ibid., 84.

196 Wright, "Historical Criticism," 35, deemphasis mine.

197 See also Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13.

198 "Traditional sources of knowledge are not sure sources of historical knowledge" (Wright, "The Continuing Journey," 13). Wright also insists that traditional believers who refuse to agree with his conclusions should abandon their claim to have either historical or even religious truth (Wright, "Historical Criticism," 35).

199 Kenneth A. Kitchen, *The Third Intermediate Period in Egypt (1100–560 B.C.)* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1973; 3d ed. 1986).

tions of the history of the Third Intermediate Period. Thus many of Nibley's observations are out-of-date three and four decades later, but, as we have seen, E. H. Ashment, much like E. A. W. Budge before him, is in many cases seriously out-of-date even as he comes off the press. Nibley's inaccuracies about the relationship between Herihor and Paanchi do not negate his suggestion that Paanchi is an authentic Egyptian name.[200]

Undrsamligar gullnar töflur[201]

Through all this discussion of the human origins of the Book of Mormon, our scholars avoid dealing with the plates and the witnesses. Ashment, Metcalfe, and Hutchinson sidestep the issue by suggesting that the plates were never anything more than a revelation (p. 7),[202] and cite second-hand hearsay from the apostate Warren Parrish (p. 332 n. 10), an episode that has already been dealt with elsewhere.[203] If the plates were nothing more than a revelation or vision, how was it that Emma Smith, who never saw them, "once felt of the plates, as they thus lay on the table, tracing their outline and shape. They seemed to be pliable like thick paper, and would rustle with a metalic [*sic*] sound when the edges were moved by the thumb, as one does sometimes thumb the edges of a book."[204] While the Three Witnesses saw the plates in vision, the Eight Witnesses saw and handled them in broad daylight without any angels or anything extraordinary about the experience. In fact, the number of witnesses who saw and felt the plates in a matter-of-fact fashion in the late 1820s is greater than the number who saw them through visions in the same time period. Too many witnesses testified to the

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200 See, for example, the 13th Dynasty version as *pꜣ-ʿnḫj* in H. S. Smith, *The Fortress of Buhen: The Inscriptions* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1976), Plate V 4 (#1078), line 5'.

201 "Wonderful Gold Plates," *Völuspá* 61.

202 Metcalfe does this in "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 175–78. He ignores all the witnesses besides Oliver Cowdery, David Whitmer, and Martin Harris.

203 See Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 155–57. Ashment's source for the episode is different than the one Anderson cites but it is also less detailed and no less hearsay.

204 Emma Smith, quoted in Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," 51, also quoted in Nelson, "A Treasured Testament," 63.

plates' existence in too many varieties of ways to justify anyone's simply dismissing them as a collective figment of imagination. Metcalfe and company's explanation of the Book of Mormon accounts for far less evidence than the alternative theory and, thus, among serious students of the Book of Mormon, it simply cannot supplant the paradigm it seeks to replace.

"You Know Me by My Habit"[205]

We have seen above that Ashment's attempt to make us believe that the translation of the book of Abraham was along the same lines as the translation of the Book of Mormon rests on faulty assumptions and incorrect readings of isolated pieces of evidence. We have also seen that Ashment's treatment of the Book of Mormon in general is an unappetizing smorgasbord of methods ranging from faulty logic to faulty readings. Clearly, when it comes to dealing with the Book of Mormon, Ashment is out of his field. It is for the book of Abraham that Ashment has the reputation of being something of an expert. Whether this reputation is deserved needs to be examined, for Ashment has left us liberal hints about that. For years he has been promising the definitive work on the Kirtland Egyptian papers and the book of Abraham.[206] If his work in this volume is any indication, he

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205 William Shakespeare, *Henry V*, act 3, scene 6, line 114.

206 Ashment claims that his book will deal with the Egyptian mummies, Reverend Caswall's Greek Psalter, and the Kinderhook plates (Ashment, "Historiography of the Canon," 282, 296 n. 4), the publication of the book of Abraham (ibid., 282, 296 n. 7), the Kirtland Egyptian Papers (Ashment, "Reducing Dissonance," 226–27, 233 n. 32), and provide "a discussion of the Book of Abraham characters" (Ashment, "A Record in the Language of My Father," 335 n. 15). It will be called "Joseph Smith Egyptian Papers" (Ashment, "Reducing Dissonance," 233 n. 32), or perhaps " 'The Papyrus Which Has Lived': Joseph Smith and the Interpretation of Ancient Egyptian Documents" (Ashment, "Making the Scriptures 'Indeed One in Our Hands,' " 259 n. 45), or maybe "*The Papyrus Which Has Lived": The Joseph Smith Papyri and the Book of Abraham* (Ashment, "Historiography of the Canon," 296). The one thing it will not, apparently, deal with is the actual text of the book of Abraham (so Ashment maintained in the *ad hoc* discussion after his presentation of "Canon and the Historian" at the 26th Annual Meeting of the Mormon History Association, 1 June 1991). Brent Metcalfe (open letter to MORM-ANT list-service, 17 August 1993) assures his audience that "most, if not all, of the photographs [of the papyri and the Kirtland Egyptian Papers] will be reproduced in Ed Ashment's forthcoming volume." This does raise the issue of whether

would appear to be unsuited for the task. This emerges in his citation of the so-called Kirtland Egyptian Papers. Looking over his transcript of the documents it is clear that he cannot read the nineteenth-century handwriting in which they are written. For example, his transcription of "possessed" as "pofsefsed" (p. 336) is a misreading of the "ss" ligature that was often used at the time. And Ashment's reading of "zub" as "sub" (p. 336) removes any doubts. Although a native English speaker can probably understand the word "righteousness" even if written "righteous=nefs,"[207] it makes a great deal of difference whether one reads a foreign transcription as "ifs" or "iss" (p. 334). Furthermore, the phrase that Ashment identifies as coming from "Smith's autographic 'Egyptian Alphabet,' "—i.e., Kirtland Egyptian Papers Egyptian manuscript 4—actually comes from Kirtland Egyptian Papers Egyptian manuscript 1, page 3, and is not in Joseph Smith's hand but in W. W. Phelps's.[208] The passage parallel to Abraham 1:2–3 that Ashment identifies as coming from Kirtland Egyptian Papers Book of Abraham manuscript 2 cannot come from that manuscript because that manuscript does not begin the Book of Abraham manuscript until Abraham 1:4.[209] The passage really comes from Kirtland Egyptian Papers Book of Abraham Manuscript 1 page 1, again in the hand of W. W. Phelps and Warren Parrish. Not a single reference to the Kirtland Egyptian Papers in Ashment's essay cites the correct manuscript. Ashment's earlier work on the Kirtland Egyptian Papers also shows a confusion of the manuscripts.[210] This leads one to suspect, since Ashment is working not from the originals

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Ashment has permission from LDS Church Archives to publish these photographs. If not, such publication may be legally actionable.

207 The "=" sign is used in transcriptions to show that a word is split between two lines; e.g. "sto=rmy" in *PWJS* 94, "re=cords" in ibid., 95, "Sher=man" in ibid., 118. (This convention is not used in *PJS*.) Unfortunately, the word "righteousness" is on one line in the manuscript Ashment is citing.

208 For Dean Jessee's identification of the hands, see Hugh Nibley, "The Meaning of the Kirtland Egyptian Papers," *BYU Studies* 11/4 (Summer 1971): 351. All the Kirtland Egyptian Papers are housed in the LDS Church Archives.

209 Ibid.

210 Edward H. Ashment, "Reducing Dissonance: The Book of Abraham as a Case Study," in Dan Vogel, ed., *The Word of God: Essays in Mormon Scripture* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990), 221–35.

but from photographs,[211] that he has garbled the order of the photos. While this pattern of mistakes is disturbing, its implications for future work are alarming. If Ashment continues with plans to publish these manuscripts (to which he would appear to have no publication rights) then we would have a publication where nothing is identified correctly. Such a publication would be worse than useless; it would be pernicious.

Exercises in Reducing Dissonance

Ashment used to rail against "fundamentalist apologists."[212] Though Signature Books seems to have dropped the "common, vaguely pejorative, and certainly misleading use of the term 'fundamentalist',"[213] they still tend to use the term "apologist" in a pejorative way. Ashment and Metcalfe are very concerned about the "apologists" for the Book of Mormon.[214] Ashment identifies over thirty apologists including one non-Mormon.[215] Metcalfe lists The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, the Department of Religious Education at Brigham

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211 On the existence of the photographs from which Ashment, Metcalfe, and George D. Smith are working, see Turley, *Victims*, 141–42.

212 Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain," 293 n. 49.

213 For the phrase and an argument that "fundamentalists"—regardless of what one may think of their position—are rational, see Carter, *Culture of Disbelief*, 167–70, 175–76; for its use in previous works, see Robinson, review of Vogel, ed., *Word of God*, 316–17; Midgley, "More Revisionist Legerdemain," 292–95, esp. n. 49; Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxxi–xxxii, esp. n. 60.

214 Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 153–84.

215 In this group Ashment includes (in order of appearance): Royal Skousen, Mark E. Petersen, Bruce R. McConkie (on p. 338 n. 17 Ashment refers to "one apologetic argument" and refers to his work, Ashment, "Making the Scriptures 'Indeed One in Our Hands,' " 247–49, where he is more open about ridiculing and identifying these two Brethren; in ibid., 259–60 n. 54 he ridicules Elder Petersen's ideas about divine providence), John Sorenson, Jack Welch, Hugh Nibley, Daniel Peterson, Stephen Ricks, Sidney Sperry, Craig Bramwell, Deloy Pack, John Tvedtnes, Paul Hoskisson, Brian Stubbs, John Gee, Richard Rust, David Fox, Wade Brown, Roger Keller, Robert Smith (a nonmember), Bruce Warren, Michael Lyon, Wayne Larsen (cited as "Larson" on p. 390), Alvin Rencher, Tim Layton, John Hilton, Robert J. Matthews, Louis Midgley, and, by impolication, Gary Novak, Alan Goff, and Stephen Robinson. (At other times, he has also included in this number Boyd K. Packer, Russell M. Nelson, Gordon B. Hinckley, and Dallin H. Oaks; Ashment, "Making the Scriptures 'Indeed One in Our Hands,' " 249–50).

Young University, the LDS Church Education System, and thirty-four different individuals.[216] Ashment is so eager to attack apologists that he will misread apologetic arguments that do not exist into the work of others.[217] From the long lists, it would appear that apologists are ubiquitous. When one considers that the basic meaning of the term "apologist" is "one who apologizes for, or defends by argument,"[218] they are. Though the term itself is neutral, the individual it describes is not because it applies to anyone who defends any point of view—all questions of neutrality are settled the moment one takes a stand on an issue. As Mormons, we have already taken a stand on several basic issues. Defending that stance is a Christian duty; Peter enjoins his readers to "be ready always to give an answer (*apologian*, defense) to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you" (1 Peter 3:15). Yet, for Ashment and company, the term is only one of opprobrium. The irony of their usage of the term "apologist" could not be more striking—since the entire book is a defense of the notion that the Book of Mormon is not truly what it claims to be. His own stance notwithstanding, Ashment accuses a long list of individuals of following an "apologetic historical methodology" (p. 374) in "misrepresenting data" (p. 375), for such constitutes "the apologetic agendum" (p. 374). But Ashment has actually provided a good description of his own work.

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216 Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 153–84: Robert J. Matthews, Vaughn J. Featherstone, Noel B. Reynolds, Robert L. Millet, Stephen D. Ricks, Louis Midgley, Alan Goff, Paul R. Cheesman, C. Wilfred Griggs, Hugh Nibley, Mark E. Petersen, Kirk Holland Vestal, Arthur Wallace, John W. Welch, Keith H. Meservy, John L. Sorenson, David A. Palmer, Kent P. Jackson, William J. Hamblin, A. Brent Merrill, Lynn M. Hilton, Hope Hilton, Daniel C. Peterson, David O. Peterson, James R. Clark, Charles G. Kroupa, Richard C. Shipp, Wade Brown, Blake T. Ostler, Susan Taber, Victor L. Ludlow, Stephen E. Robinson, Clyde J. Williams, and Monte S. Nyman.

217 For example, my article discussing a few occurrences of the name "Abraham in Ancient Egyptian Texts," *Ensign* 22 (July 1992): 60–62, is fundamentally misconstrued by Ashment as a full-blown *Use of the Egyptian Magical Papyri to Authenticate the Book of Abraham* (Salt Lake City: Resource Communications, 1993). Ashment would have done better to understand the argument before he unwittingly supplied evidence that supported my argument (e.g., ibid., p. 9).

218 *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. "apologist."

Ashment seeks to dismiss the "apologists" by categorizing them according to a spectrum of his own devising. "Those who propose a completely ideographic, conceptual translation of the Book of Mormon . . . may be described as the most conservative" (p. 337). "At the other end of the spectrum . . . those who propose a literal, virtually word-for-word rendering of a proposed original text written in Egyptian (in a few scenarios) or in Hebrew with Egyptian characters . . . can be termed liberal" (pp. 337–38). Ashment thinks that the conservatives "accommodate evidence about Joseph Smith's actual translation methodology" (p. 337), while, on the other hand, he sees the liberals as concentrating on the "claims about the Book of Mormon being a 'literal' translation" (pp. 337–38). Ashment seems to think that if he can categorize the arguments, he has mastered them. He has not. As we have seen, the dichotomy between the claims to translation and the evidence of actual methodology exists only in Ashment's mind.

Metcalfe seeks to distinguish between "traditionalist assumptions" and "critical approaches."[219] Metcalfe then switches terms by saying that "tradition-minded members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints" employ "apologetics for this stance,"[220] though he ignores the real possibility that one might employ apologetics for "critical approaches" as he himself clearly does. Though Metcalfe admits that "both apologetic and critical scholars are led by prior assumptions," he does not analyze the assumptions of "critical scholars" other than making the naive assertion that "the critical scholar's interpretation depends not on a proposition made by a text or tradition but on a methodology."[221] In sending his reader to "useful introductions"[222] Metcalfe is certainly depending on several distinct interpretive traditions (some of which contradict each other) and on the propositions made by certain texts. Metcalfe forgets that what he calls the "traditionalist" stance also uses a variety of methodologies. In his article, Metcalfe misuses the term "apologetic" by setting up a false dichotomy between "apologetic" and "critical." Metcalfe begs the question when he asserts that "critical scholars" determine the text not by what it

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219 The terms come from Metcalfe, "Apologetic and Critical Assumptions about Book of Mormon Historicity," 153, 155.

220 Ibid., 153.

221 Ibid., 156.

222 Ibid., 168 n. 48.

says but by looking at "the overall phenomena of the text in its broad historical and literary framework."[223] The point at issue is what the historical and literary framework is in which to place the Book of Mormon. While Metcalfe notes that "advocates of the book's antiquity" believe the Book of Mormon is "what it claims to be," he would rather laud those "critical scholars [who] shift the terms of investigation" to "the historical setting within which readers first encountered the text," implying that it is better to disbelieve that the Book of Mormon is what it claims to be.[224] What Metcalfe advocates is essentially a faithless approach. The problem with Metcalfe's position is that the Book of Mormon fits comfortably into an ancient historical and literary framework, and less so into a modern framework.[225] By Metcalfe's logic, the appropriate milieu in which to analyze and interpret the *Westcar Papyrus* is not ancient Egypt but early twentieth-century Germany. What sane student of Old English would insist that Beowulf should only be seen in the light of Britain in 1815? Metcalfe's argument is conceptually muddled and methodologically nonsensical; his conclusions are predetermined by his assumptions. One need not marvel at the evangelistic zeal with which Metcalfe produces defenses of a "critical" method that he clearly has neither understood nor mastered, as this phenomenon has been noted for some time:

> For those for whom any explanation of the origins of latter-day scripture will do except the real one, there is no remedy. . . . Disbelievers . . . are intensely anxious to try to establish any alternative that disputes the divinity in the process. For them it is really not that any explanation but one *will do*—for them, one explanation definitely *will not do*![226]

Thus Metcalfe's apologetics are as predictable as Ashment's.

Although I do not agree with Ashment's musings on reducing dissonance, they do provide an interesting standard against which to measure Ashment's own arguments. Having adopted the non-Mormon/anti-Mormon view that the Book of Mormon is

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223 Ibid., 174.

224 Ibid.

225 For a discussion of the Book of Mormon in its 1830s milieu, see Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 119–42.

226 Neal A. Maxwell, *"But for a Small Moment"* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 42.

a product of the nineteenth century, when Ashment is confronted with evidence (Hebraisms) that it might be an ancient book, the ensuing discomfort results in pressure for him and his associates to reduce or eliminate it.[227] Ashment does this in two ways: (1) by acquiring "new information or beliefs that will increase the existing consonance and thus cause the total dissonance to be reduced,"[228] in other words by arguing that the Hebraisms are part of Joseph Smith's style; and (2) by trying to "forget or reduce the importance of those cognitions that are in a dissonant relationship,"[229] in other words by trying to dismiss the evidence adduced by others by categorizing the people and ignoring the statements of the witnesses. In sum, because the evidence about the translation of the Book of Mormon leads to a positive conclusion about Joseph Smith's ability to translate ancient languages—which consequently produces dissonance—a major strategy of apologists is to shift the focus of the Latter-day Saint community to the new belief that the Book of Mormon is a nineteenth-century document.[230] By Ashment's standards, because he himself is guilty of "misrepresenting data," he has demonstrated his clear "apologetic agendum." Though Ashment professes to rue the label of "Korihor" which he finds attached to himself,[231] he and his fellows are neither pro-Mormon nor neutral[232] and have never refuted the substantive basis for the label.[233] Having rejected the company of the Mormon apologists,[234] Ashment seeks now refuge among like-minded ilk, but

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227 Ashment, "Reducing Dissonance," 221.

228 Ibid.

229 Ibid.

230 The rhetoric here is borrowed wholesale from Ashment, "Reducing Dissonance," 222–23.

231 When Ashment cites Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," 344 n. 22, as giving examples of the "use of the Korihor label by modern apologists," he might want to hark back to the beginning of his harangue at the plenary session of the 26th annual meeting of the Mormon History Association, 1 June 1991; for most of the participants, the first time they heard the label "Korihor" applied to Ashment was from his own lips. I do not, however, think the label necessarily fits all of the contributors. As I have shown above, Sherem would be a closer fit for David Wright.

232 "The ingenuous reader might suppose that the only way to avoid either accepting *or* rejecting the claim to modern-day revelation is to leave it strictly alone, not to write a book about it." Nibley, "How to Write an Anti-Mormon Book," 474.

233 See Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxiii.

they are still apologists—David Wright is even open about his use of "post-critical apologetics."[235] Metcalfe and company are a different sort of apologists than the ones against whom they rage, as they produce apologetics for the disaffected and the disbelieving. If the apologetics to which Ashment and Metcalfe object are products of the defenders of the faith, surely this book is a product of the defenders of the faithless.

Conclusions

The authors who contributed their work to this book are barking up the wrong tree. They wish to see the Book of Mormon as a product of Joseph Smith's environment, forgetting that this very theory was discredited during Joseph Smith's own lifetime, as "it was quickly realized, not only by the Mormons, but by the anti-Mormons as well, that Joseph Smith by his own wits could not possibly have written the Book of Mormon."[236] One is left to wonder, "if that theory was so readily discredited (please note, it was *not* supplanted by the Spaulding theory but broke down of its own accord, and the Spaulding substitute was only found after a desperate interval of frantic searching), if it could not stand up for a year on its own merits, why should it work now?"[237]

The book, in sum, is a series of explorations in critical methodologies that do not work. The theories they bring forth actually explain less of the available data than the ones they wish to discredit. Though some of the authors may indeed be sincere about their work, there is nonetheless a good deal of posturing going on in the book. The authors, in betraying their scriptural text, are not true to the faith, true to the facts, nor even necessarily true to the methods to which they give lip-service. If this assortment of logical errors, contradictory hypotheses, shaky methodology, and distorted history were more honest, it would

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234 In which he was once counted; see Charles M. Larson, *By His Own Hand upon Papyrus: A New Look at the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 2d ed. (Grand Rapids: Institute for Religious Research, 1992), 164.

235 See Wright, "Historical Criticism," 28, 31–34.

236 Hugh Nibley, "Just Another Book?" *CWHN* 8:149. The whole essay (8:148–69) deserves to be reread for its succinct summary of worldly theories of Book of Mormon origins.

237 Ibid., 151.

carry the standard disclaimer often attached to fictional works: Any resemblance to actual persons or events is purely coincidental.