



Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011

Volume 8 | Number 1

Article 3

1996

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Maddox, John Wm. (1996) "A Listing of Points and Counterpoints," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 1989–2011*: Vol. 8 : No. 1 , Article 3.

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BRIGHAM YOUNG UNIVERSITY • PROVO, UTAH

Title A Listing of Points and Counterpoints

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Reference *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 (1996): 1-26.

ISSN 1099-9450 (print), 2168-3123 (online)

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

The claims of Metcalfe's *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* appear to have been adequately responded to in the *Review*.

Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed. *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993. xiv + 446 pp. \$26.95, and the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* (1994–1995). 6/1 (1994), 12.95; 6/2 (1994), 7/1 (1995), and 7/2 (1995), \$8.95 each.

John Wm. Maddox

A Listing of Points and Counterpoints

Shortly after the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon*, vol. 6, no. 1, was published, containing over 566 pages of responses to arguments raised in Brent L. Metcalfe's *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), a few people were heard to say that the FARMS publication had failed to address any substantive issues head on. That assessment did not seem to me to describe the contents of the *Review* that I had read. So I began going through both books to see how many substantive issues had been raised and addressed. Since neither book had an index at the time (vol. 7, no. 1 of the *Review* now contains a cumulative index, although it only lists page numbers and is unannotated), it was not easy to figure out where each argument and its respective counterpoints could be found.

Without wanting to revisit old issues that may have already been more than adequately covered, I list below my findings, for what they may be worth. I identified about 170 arguments raised in *New Approaches* that find responses in vol. 6, no. 1, or in subsequent issues of the *Review*. In my personal opinion, most of the arguments are not new (*New Approaches* presents less than meets the eye), and the vast majority of them are answered substantively and satisfactorily. The few arguments that were not addressed

I express appreciation to John W. Welch for his suggestions and to Alison Coutts for her assistance in preparing this review.

struck me as being either immaterial to the issue of Book of Mormon authorship (such as efforts to discredit the work of scholars like Hugh Nibley) or vaguely alleged parallels or observations. Accordingly, I found the responses of the reviewers to be cogent and sufficiently persuasive.

All page references to the *Review (RBBM)* are to vol. 6, no. 1, unless otherwise noted with different volume and issue numbers. *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* is abbreviated *NABM*.¹

Question 1:

Is the Book of Mormon a product of Joseph Smith's world?

Alleged Anachronisms: Out of time sequence?

Claim: The Book of Mormon is wrong to claim that the brass plates were a complete Old Testament up to 600 B.C. Ashment, *NABM*, 332 n. 8. Response: Besides the fact that the Book of Mormon does not necessarily make such a claim, some biblical scholars date all or much of Leviticus and Deuteronomy before 600 B.C. when Lehi left Jerusalem. Gee, *RBBM*, 108–10.

Claim: Malachi's quotation on burning the wicked as stubble is found in 1 Nephi, before Malachi lived. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 425–27. Response: The words also exist essentially the same in Exodus and Isaiah. Roper, *RBBM*, 375–77.

Claim: Malachi's words are found in Ether and 1 Nephi and 2 Nephi before they were given in 3 Nephi. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 426–27. Response: Close similarity does not necessarily mean dependence. Roper, *RBBM*, 375–77.

¹ Authors cited from *New Approaches* include Edward H. Ashment, Melodie Moench Charles, Anthony A. Hutchinson, John C. Kunich, Stan Larson, Deanne G. Matheny, Brent Lee Metcalfe, Mark D. Thomas, Dan Vogel, and David P. Wright. Reviewers cited from the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* include Richard Lloyd Anderson, Ross David Baron, Davis Bitton, Kevin Christensen, John Gee, Alan Goff, Louis Midgley, Robert L. Millet, Matthew Roper, Royal Skousen, James E. Smith, John L. Sorenson, Martin Tanner, John A. Tvedtnes, and John W. Welch.

Claim: *Christ* is a Greek word and the Nephites could not have known Greek. Ashment, *NABM*, 346 n. 24; 427–29. Response: *Christ* is an English translation of whatever word was revealed by the angel and recorded on the plates. Tvedtnes and Gee, *RBBM*, 49–50, 78.

Claim: The word *Christ* was changed to *messiah* to prevent an anachronism. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 427–32. Response: Other things may account for the change, and Jacob does not necessarily claim that the angel revealed unique information. Roper, *RBBM*, 366.

Do the covenants in the Book of Mormon reflect modern theology?

Claim: The Book of Mormon covenant of obedience reflects the Federal Theology of the Protestant reformers. Thomas, *NABM*, 71–73. Response: The Protestant reformers did not stress obedience as a condition of salvation, and thus the similarities are not strong. Anderson, *RBBM*, 408–11.

Claim: Richard Anderson's claims for a Restoration ignore the complexity of the nineteenth-century context. Thomas, *NABM*, 72–73. Response: Anderson's claims are still possible when a Reformation element is included. Anderson, *RBBM*, 411–14.

Claim: The personal covenant in the Book of Mormon prayers reflects 1830 Protestant thought. Thomas, *NABM*, 74–75. Response: This point overlooks some significant differences: the sacrament was not a covenant in mainstream Protestantism. Anderson, *RBBM*, 408–11.

Claim: Unlike the Book of Mormon's group covenants, the sacrament is a weaker individual covenant. Thomas, *NABM*, 74–76. Response: This argument reduces Christ's teachings to primitive social worship. Anderson, *RBBM*, 389–90, 410–11.

Claim: The differences between 3 Nephi 18 and Moroni 4–5 show variation in worship. Thomas, *NABM*, 56. Response: The sacrament is a composite covenant, and the alleged differences are imagined. Anderson, *RBBM*, 401, 404–5.

Was the Book of Mormon meant for a nineteenth-century audience?

Claim: The Book of Mormon is best understood in a nineteenth-century rhetorical context. Thomas, *NABM*, 53–54. Response: The proposed “rhetorical approach” applies to fiction, not history. Gee, *RBBM*, 99–102.

Claim: The Book of Mormon itself declares that it is intended for a nineteenth-century American audience. Vogel, *NABM*, 23. Response: Limiting its message to this specific audience is too narrow a view. Being an ancient text and speaking to a nineteenth-century audience are not mutually exclusive attributes. Tanner, *RBBM*, 422–24.

Does the portrayal of the sacrament ordinance in the Book of Mormon betray nineteenth-century origins?

Claim: The Book of Mormon uses literary forms from Joseph Smith’s day in the sacrament prayers. Thomas, *NABM*, 54–55. Response: A few phrases from the Book of Mormon also appear in Joseph Smith’s time, but their presence does not preclude an ancient underlying text. Anderson, *RBBM*, 380.

Claim: Two phrases from the Book of Mormon sacrament prayers place them in the time of Joseph Smith. Thomas, *NABM*, 58–60. Response: Both phrases find their roots in the Bible, consistent with an ancient origin in the words of Christ. Anderson, *RBBM*, 393.

Claim: In 3 Nephi 18, the term *disputations* refers to questions about the sacrament in Joseph Smith’s day. Thomas, *NABM*, 55. Response: *Disputations* has a much broader context than just the sacrament. Anderson, *RBBM*, 381–82.

Claim: Nineteenth-century disputes about the sacrament are answered in the Book of Mormon, which paraphrases Paul. Thomas, *NABM*, 74–76. Response: These debates go back to early Christianity, and Paul quotes Jesus. Anderson, *RBBM*, 382–83.

Claim: Relying on Revillout, Nibley makes a circular proof of the Book of Mormon sacrament prayers. Thomas, *NABM*, 60 n. 3. Response: Nibley's proof is not circular; it relies on previously published work. Anderson, *RBBM*, 394–96.

Claim: The Book of Mormon sacrament prayers do not have a historical core in the New Testament. Thomas, *NABM*, 61–63. Response: This type of argument also doubts the historicity of the Bible. Anderson, *RBBM*, 384–85, 388.

Claim: If the sacrament prayers could be reconstructed from the New Testament, they would not match the Book of Mormon prayers. Thomas, *NABM*, 62–63. Response: The Book of Mormon prayers *do* contain Christ's doctrine found in the New Testament. Anderson, *RBBM*, 386–89.

Claim: The second-century introduction of the *epiclesis* precludes the historicity of 3 Nephi. Thomas, *NABM*, 63–65. Response: Christ's explanation of the intent of the ordinances is complete right within his words in the Book of Mormon. Anderson, *RBBM*, 390–93, 397–98.

Claim: Like nineteenth-century Protestantism, the Book of Mormon appears to reject transubstantiation while viewing the sacrament as more than mere symbols. Thomas, *NABM*, 65–69. Response: The history of Israel had a more prominent place in the minds of early Mormons, and so rhetorical analysis should focus on other factors. Anderson, *RBBM*, 393–94.

Claim: The Book of Mormon sacramental remembrance relates to the emotional evangelism popular in Joseph Smith's day. Thomas, *NABM*, 53, 70–71. Response: It is more closely related to Old Testament commandments. Anderson, *RBBM*, 400–402.

Claim: Declarations that the Book of Mormon brings back a lost covenant of obedience are not supported by institutional narratives. Thomas, *NABM*, 73. Response: In light of the Old Testament, the Book of Mormon narratives contain a covenant. Anderson, *RBBM*, 401–2.

Claim: A tension exists between formal and informal sacrament prayers in the Book of Mormon. Thomas, *NABM*, 56.

Response: The two prayers go together, precluding the need to make them identical. Anderson, *RBBM*, 399–401.

Claim: Taking the name of Christ upon oneself reflects nineteenth-century American Protestantism. Thomas, *NABM*, 74. Response: This idea goes clear back to the Apostles. Anderson, *RBBM*, 399–400.

Claim: The form of the Book of Mormon sacrament prayers indicates creation or shaping by nineteenth-century writers. Thomas, *NABM*, 53, 77. Response: The Book of Mormon contains the doctrine of Christ; it is not an ethics guide placed in a fictionalized historical setting. Anderson, *RBBM*, 415–17.

Is the Universalism in the Book of Mormon a product of the nineteenth century?

Claim: “Eat, drink, and be merry” is directed at nineteenth-century Universalists. Vogel, *NABM*, 25. Response: This theme is found six times in the Old Testament and applies to many different groups. Tanner, *RBBM*, 425–26.

Claim: Mormon 8:31 and 2 Nephi 28:22 are both directed at nineteenth-century Universalists. Vogel, *NABM*, 25. Response: These passages also apply to generic atheists, born-again Christians, and others. Tanner, *RBBM*, 426–27.

Claim: Alma 1:2–4 and 21:6–9 oppose universal salvation. Vogel, *NABM*, 31, 34. Response: These two passages also mention other false doctrines that are not Universalist. Tanner, *RBBM*, 427–29.

Claim: Some Latter-day Saints and nonmembers recognized that the Book of Mormon taught against Universalist notions. Vogel, *NABM*, 24. Response: All scripture is profitable for reproof and correction. Tanner, *RBBM*, 429–31.

Claim: Ancient Americans could not have debated Universalism in a manner pertinent to the nineteenth century. Vogel, *NABM*, 47–48. Response: Universal salvation is an ancient and universal theme. Tanner, *RBBM*, 432–33; Christensen, *7/2:201–8*.

Did Joseph Smith put his own theology into the Book of Mormon, or was the Book of Mormon a part of Joseph Smith's own development?

Claim: Unlike the Book of Mormon, "the New Testament never refers to Jesus as Father." Charles, *NABM*, 91. Response: New Testament statements by Jesus, the writings of Matthew and other early Christians, the Old Testament, and some modern scholars show otherwise. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:104–5; Tanner, 7/2:27–28.

Claim: Changes in the 1837 edition of the Book of Mormon show evolution in Joseph Smith's theology. Charles, *NABM*, 107. Response: Alleged developments are already present elsewhere in the 1830 edition. Millet, *RBBM*, 193–94. None of the changes alter the meaning of the verses. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:33.

Claim: Joseph Smith's statements about the Godhead in 1832 and 1835 differ from those in the Book of Mormon. Charles, *NABM*, 103–4. Response: The distinctions are insignificant; the prophet's teachings are consistent with the Book of Mormon. Millet, *RBBM*, 194–96. The Doctrine and Covenants from 1830 to 1835 is congruent with the Book of Mormon. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:112–14. An 1835 account of the First Vision describes two heavenly beings. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:32.

Claim: Joseph Smith's 1844 claim of theological consistency in his teaching is not supported by Church history. Charles, *NABM*, 104. Response: Joseph's claim makes sense on several grounds. Millet, *RBBM*, 194–96. Even prophets learn "line upon line." Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:111–14.

Claim: An explanation of the doctrine of divine investiture of authority and the related pamphlet on the Father and the Son would not have been necessary except for the current view of the Godhead. Charles, *NABM*, 106–7. Response: Joseph Smith understood the nature of the Godhead in consistent terms. Millet, *RBBM*, 194–96. The pamphlet was little more than an explanation of the ancient law of agency. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:109–11.

Claim: Several things contributed to doctrinal confusion on the part of some Church members. Charles, *NABM*, 106–7.

Response: Such confusion should not be equated with confusion on the part of the prophets. Millet, *RBBM*, 195–96.

Claim: The Book of Mormon differs from modern Latter-day Saint authorities on the doctrine of Christ as the Father. Charles, *NABM*, 83. Response: True Christian doctrine is unchanged since Adam; the Book of Mormon reflects that. Millet, *RBBM*, 189–90. The Book of Mormon distinguishes between Jesus and his Father. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:28.

Claim: We cannot assume the Nephites understood Jesus and the Father as separate beings. Charles, *NABM*, 99–100. Response: The text shows evidence to the contrary. Millet, *RBBM*, 191. The Book of Mormon does not explain everything the Nephites knew. Millet, *RBBM*, 197–98. The Book of Mormon often makes the distinction. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:107–9; Tanner, 7/2:26–27.

Claim: The Book of Mormon reflects Trinitarianism. Charles, *NABM*, 96–97. Response: The Book of Mormon testifies of Jesus' Godhood. It does not fully explain the Godhead. Millet, *RBBM*, 192. Trinitarianism cannot be found in the Book of Mormon or the Bible. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:106–7; Tanner, 7/2:25–26.

Claim: Sabellianism would explain Nephite belief in Jesus and the Father as two different manifestations of the same being. Charles, *NABM*, 100. Response: Sabellianism is only found by citing a few verses and ignoring the rest of the Book of Mormon. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:105–7.

Claim: The Nephites believed that Jesus would have a mortal body, but not necessarily that he would actually be mortal. Charles, *NABM*, 84. Response: Abinadi, quoting and interpreting Isaiah, taught that Jesus would die. Millet, *RBBM*, 190; Baron, 7/1:97–98; Tanner, 7/2:12–14.

Claim: The Book of Mormon describes Jesus as creator, not as agent of his Father. Charles, *NABM*, 100–101. Response: The purpose of the Book of Mormon is to testify of the divinity of Jesus the redeemer. Millet, *RBBM*, 192.

Claim: The Church projects current beliefs back to earlier times. Charles, *NABM*, 103. Response: The doctrine of Christ has always been understood by the prophets. Millet, *RBBM*, 199;

Tanner, *7/2*:21–22. All history adjusts to accommodate new understanding. Christensen, *RBBM 7/2*:188–92.

Is the Book of Mormon historical?

Claim: “Whether the Book of Mormon is ancient really does not matter.” Hutchinson, *NABM*, 16. Response: It does matter. What we see and how we define ourselves relies on the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Christensen, *RBBM 7/2*:212–18.

Claim: Drastically different expectations of a messiah between the New Testament and the Book of Mormon preclude the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Charles, *NABM*, 94. Response: The argument is circular. Tvedtnes, *RBBM*, 16–18. Expectations between Old and New Worlds are not that different. Baron, *RBBM 7/1*:100–101.

Claim: The implications of a historically accurate Book of Mormon are counter to Christianity. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 14–15. Response: This is assertion, not proof. Midgley, *RBBM*, 225–26. A historically accurate Book of Mormon contributes much to the lives of those who believe it. Christensen, *RBBM 7/2*:179–87.

Claim: A literally historic Book of Mormon leads to idolatry. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 14–15. Response: The Book of Mormon is the Saints’ best defense against idolatry. Midgley, *RBBM*, 225 n. 56. LDS theology does not depend exclusively on the Bible. Millet, *RBBM*, 198.

Claim: The prophecies of Christ parallel New Testament events and cannot prove Book of Mormon historicity. Charles, *NABM*, 84–90. Response: The Book of Mormon proves the validity of the Bible, not the other way around. Millet, *RBBM*, 198–99. The prophecies were intended to build Nephite faith, not prove historicity. Baron, *RBBM 7/1*:98–99.

Claim: Detailed prophecies in the Book of Mormon are non-essential. Charles, *NABM*, 89. Response: The details seem important to us, so why not to early Christians? Tanner, *RBBM 7/2*:14.

Claim: Rhetorical criticism allows one to discuss the Book of Mormon without conclusions about historicity. Vogel, *NABM*, 21.

Response: Rhetorical criticism depends entirely on a historical context. Tanner, *RBBM*, 418–19.

Claim: The Book of Mormon title page acknowledges flaws in the record. Charles, *NABM*, 82. Response: This is an inaccurate reading of Moroni's words. Millet, *RBBM*, 189.

Claim: King Benjamin's address follows the pattern of a nineteenth-century revival. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 421 n. 31. Response: Benjamin's address follows an ancient and complex pattern. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:174–76.

Is the Book of Mormon myth?

Claim: The prophecies about witnesses to the Book of Mormon evolve, allowing Joseph Smith to expand the number of witnesses. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 423–25. Response: This assertion ignores key wording in the prophecies. Roper, *RBBM*, 373–75.

Claim: Joseph Smith's description of the angel changed with his theology. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 6–7. Response: This is an effort to eliminate a historical Moroni. Midgley, *RBBM*, 241.

Claim: The gold plates were not literal. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 6–7. Response: This effort to eliminate historical Nephites and artifacts ignores the testimony of witnesses. Midgley, *RBBM*, 241.

Claim: The Book of Mormon, like the Old and New Testaments, need not be historically accurate to teach God's word. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 4–5. Response: The Bible is not myth, neither is the Book of Mormon. Midgley, *RBBM*, 242–52.

Question 2:

Is the Book of Mormon a product of Joseph Smith's language?

Are the language claims of the Book of Mormon credible?

Claim: Mayan glyphs for *and it came to pass* are not related to Book of Mormon language. Ashment, *NABM*, 371–72.

Response: However, the translation of those glyphs is intriguing. Gee, *RBBM*, 82 n. 102.

Claim: No link exists between any Mesoamerican writing system and the Near East or the Anthon manuscript. Matheny, *NABM*, 320–21. Response: Some incomplete attempts have shown some relation. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 358–59.

Claim: Mayan hieroglyphics cannot be reformed Egyptian. Ashment, *NABM*, 341. Response: Nobody claims they are, but the authority cited by Ashment himself continually compares the two civilizations. Gee, *RBBM*, 82–83.

Claim: Altering Egyptian characters to accommodate Nephite language is unheard of. Ashment, *NABM*, 331. Response: Egyptian, Sumerian, and Demotic scripts were all altered to accommodate other languages. Gee, *RBBM*, 81–82.

Claim: It is impossible to use Egyptian hieroglyphics to express another language. Ashment, *NABM*, 338–41. Response: Papyrus Amherst 63 refutes this assertion. Gee, *RBBM*, 96–99.

Claim: Papyrus Amherst 63 is not an example of one language written in the script of another. Ashment, *NABM*, 352–53. Response: This objection misunderstands the document. Gee, *RBBM*, 97–99.

Claim: Book of Mormon syntax cannot be related to Egyptian. Ashment, *NABM*, 365 and n. 42. Response: This claim is not consistent with current scholarship. Gee, *RBBM*, 106–7.

Claim: Book of Mormon language reflects the King James Bible. Ashment, *NABM*, 356–59. Response: We lack the necessary writing samples from Joseph Smith to test such an assertion. Gee, *RBBM*, 87–89.

Claim: Hebrew syntax in the Book of Mormon fails when compared to Hebrew Jeremiah. Ashment, *NABM*, 361–63. Response: Jeremiah is not a good control document. Gee and Skousen, *RBBM*, 91–92, 132–34.

Claim: Joseph Smith's so-called Hebrew syntax is found in the Doctrine and Covenants. Ashment, *NABM*, 362–63. Response: Close examination invalidates this assertion. Gee, *RBBM*, 89–91.

Claim: Nominative absolutes should be found in *Selections from the Book of Mormon in Hebrew*, but they are not. Ashment, *NABM*, 363–64. Response: Modern Hebrew and ancient Hebrew are not the same language. Gee, *RBBM*, 92–93.

Claim: If Stubbs were correct, the syntax in Genesis 1:1 and Words of Mormon would be similar. Ashment, *NABM*, 365–66. Response: This argument avoids the question. Gee, *RBBM*, 93.

Claim: Translation of conceptual pictographs makes it pointless to look for particular syntax. Ashment, *NABM*, 341–42. Response: Joseph Smith never said the plates contained conceptual pictographs. Gee, *RBBM*, 83–86.

Claim: The Greek *chortadzo* (*sic*) cannot mean “to fill [with the Holy Ghost].” Hutchinson, *NABM*, 14. Response: The Septuagint disproves this. Welch, *RBBM*, 150–51.

Claim: The Book of Mormon speaks of *linen* and *vineyards*. Matheny, *NABM*, 301. Response: Like the Spaniards, the Nephites may have used Old World names for New World products. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 336.

Claim: “Second death” concepts in Alma are not Egyptian; they come from Revelation 21. Ashment, *NABM*, 371. Response: According to Erik Hornung, the concepts in Alma and Egyptian writings are very similar. Gee, *RBBM*, 107–8.

Claim: Joseph Smith viewed characters from the plates with their English equivalent in the seer stone. Ashment, *NABM*, 332–33. Response: This posture relies on the testimony of people who were not there. Gee, *RBBM*, 83–84.

Claim: The “Hebrew” in the F. G. Williams document should be the same as modern Hebrew. Ashment, *NABM*, 333–34. Response: The transliteration on the Williams document is probably not the Prophet’s. Gee, *RBBM*, 85–86.

Claim: Evidence indicates that Joseph Smith translated conceptual characters, not word for word. Ashment, *NABM*, 336–37. Response: The evidence is not directly attributed to Joseph Smith. Gee and Skousen, *RBBM*, 85–86, 96, 144.

Where did the names in the Book of Mormon originate?

Claim: Korihor and Paanchi are not Egyptian names, as Nibley asserts. Ashment, *NABM*, 343–44. Response: One cannot rule out the possibility that Paanchi is Egyptian. Gee, *RBBM*, 110–11.

Claim: Book of Mormon names are accounted for by the process of “affixation.” Ashment, *NABM*, 346–50. Response: This analysis ignores authentic Near Eastern name stems and many nonbiblical names. Gee, *RBBM*, 102–6.

Claim: Nibley’s claim that the names Pahoran, Mormon, and Deseret have Egyptian roots is faulty. Ashment, *NABM*, 344–45. Response: When first published thirty years ago, Nibley’s theories were based on then-current scholarship. Gee, *RBBM*, 110–11.

Does the Book of Mormon plagiarize the King James Bible?

Claim: Joseph Smith copied phrases from the King James Version (KJV) while translating the Book of Mormon. Ashment, *NABM*, 368–71. Response: Joseph Smith knew little about the Bible. Gee, *RBBM*, 99–102. Mere plagiarism does not account for the complexity of the Book of Mormon narrative. Goff, *RBBM* 7/1:192–206.

Claim: B. H. Roberts affirmed that Joseph Smith compared the KJV when translating. Larson, *NABM*, 116. Response: Roberts said that when the KJV and the plates agreed in substance, the KJV was used. Welch, *RBBM*, 156.

Claim: If the Book of Mormon repeats the mistakes of the KJV, we can rule out coincidence. Larson, *NABM*, 117. Response: One cannot prove that the so-called mistakes are actual mistakes. Welch, *RBBM*, 157.

Claim: Comparing 3 Nephi and Matthew can help determine the historicity of the Book of Mormon. Larson, *NABM*, 117. Response: Nobody knows what was and was not in the original Greek. Welch, *RBBM*, 153.

Claim: Joseph Smith often changed the KJV at italicized words. Larson, *NABM*, 130. Response: This claim is not supported by a comparison of 3 Nephi and the text of the Sermon on the Mount. Skousen, *RBBM*, 122–44; Welch, *RBBM*, 145–46, 157 nn. 22–23.

Claim: Eight mistranslations in the KJV are repeated in the Book of Mormon. Larson, *NABM*, 121–27. Response: The alleged mistranslations involve insubstantial differences. Welch, *RBBM*, 158–63. The differences are insignificant, especially in a nineteenth-century context. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:158–59.

Claim: The Book of Mormon account of the sermon of Jesus is plagiarized from the KJV. Larson, *NABM*, 132. Response: This argument is neither proved nor disproved. Welch, *RBBM*, 163 n. 39, 167–68. Blind plagiarism cannot explain the complexity of the Book of Mormon account. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:177–79.

Claim: Joseph Smith's use of *therefore* and *wherefore* depends on whether he was copying or embellishing the KJV. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 411. Response: He might have used those words according to his preference. Tvedtnes, *RBBM*, 42.

Claim: Sperry said that if the Book of Mormon copied the errors of the KJV, then it should be rejected. Larson, *NABM*, 116. Response: Sperry viewed the Book of Mormon as an independent ancient text. Welch, *RBBM*, 156.

Does the book of Alma depend on the Epistle to the Hebrews?

Claim: The dependence of Alma 12–13 on the Epistle to the Hebrews shows Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon. Wright, *NABM*, 165–66. Response: This conclusion gives inadequate weight to Genesis 14 and other biblical sources. Welch, *RBBM*, 169–70.

Claim: If Joseph Smith wrote Alma 12–13, then he wrote the entire Book of Mormon. Wright, *NABM*, 165–66. Response: The evidence for plagiarizing Hebrews is weak, and so is this conclusion. Welch, *RBBM*, 180–81.

Claim: Six motifs found in the same order in Hebrews and Alma show copying of the KJV. Wright, *NABM*, 171–73. Response: This ignores Genesis 14 and other details found between the six selected motifs in Alma. Welch, *RBBM*, 171–75.

Claim: In Alma 13, Joseph Smith is practicing “text conservation,” elucidating Hebrews by explaining that the priesthood is without beginning or end. Wright, *NABM*, 172–73. Response: The phrase *end of years* is common to the Bible and does not prove that Alma is dependent on Hebrews. Welch, *RBBM*, 173.

Claim: Alma 12–13 reflects and parallels the two great themes of Hebrews, faith and priesthood. Wright, *NABM*, 195–96. Response: The differences between the two texts are all but ignored. Welch, *RBBM*, 170.

Claim: Both Alma and Hebrews speak of *Abraham*, not *Abram*; therefore, the text of Alma derives from Hebrews. Wright, *NABM*, 178 n. 30. Response: Joseph Smith would have translated *Abram* as *Abraham*. Welch, *RBBM*, 175.

Claim: Alma copies Hebrews concerning payment of tithing. Wright, *NABM*, 174–75. Response: Alma is consistent with Nephite religion and with an earlier interpretation. Welch, *RBBM*, 175.

Claim: Hebrews and Alma both have similar introductions to similar quotes. Wright, *NABM*, 178–80. Response: The significant differences between the two weaken this point, as does the fact that the preexilic psalms share this similarity. Welch, *RBBM*, 177.

Claim: Alma 12 and Hebrews 3 quote material with four identical elements. Wright, *NABM*, 180–81. Response: These elements also appear anciently in Psalms, but Alma’s phraseology is his own. Welch, *RBBM*, 178.

Claim: The four key elements common to Hebrews 3 and Alma 12 prove plagiarism. Wright, *NABM*, 180–82. Response: Alma could have had access to, and been influenced by, Psalm 95 and Numbers 14, but his phraseology is consistent and peculiar to his book. Welch, *RBBM*, 177–79.

Claim: The occurrences of the four motifs are numerically similar between Alma and Hebrews. Wright, *NABM*, 181.

Response: The themes are also common to the rest of the Book of Mormon and the Old Testament. Welch, *RBBM*, 179–80.

Claim: After the “quoted material,” Alma uses similar transitions leading to exhortation passages. Wright, *NABM*, 179–80. Response: Alma is just being consistent, and the exhortations are neither similar nor exclusive to Hebrews. Welch, *RBBM*, 177–78.

Claim: The hypothesis of a parent text for both Hebrews and Alma is very weak. Wright, *NABM*, 204–7. Response: Because Christian doctrine has been the same since Adam, there could be a parent text. Millet, *RBBM*, 189–90. The existence of the Book of Mormon itself is more problematic than the existence of a parent text. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:187.

Claim: Six words in the same order are common to Hebrews 9 and Alma 12. Wright, *NABM*, 196–97. Response: 145 phrases of four words or longer appear both in Alma 12–13 and scattered throughout the Bible. Welch, *RBBM*, 176.

How does Matthew 5–7 compare with the report of Christ’s visit to America?

Claim: 3 Nephi 12–14 is Joseph Smith’s attempt to improve the Sermon on the Mount. Charles, *NABM*, 83. Response: This assertion relies on some strands of current biblical scholarship, not revelation. Millet, *RBBM*, 198–99. In Matthew, Jesus is mortal; in 3 Nephi he is resurrected. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:9–10.

Claim: Comparing Matthew 5–7 and 3 Nephi 12–14 tests whether the Book of Mormon is a genuine translation. Larson, *NABM*, 116. Response: Such a comparison assumes too much. Welch, *RBBM*, 153–54.

Claim: No evidence has been shown that the Book of Mormon substantiates a visit of Christ to America. Larson, *NABM*, 133. Response: Those who make this claim simply choose to ignore the evidence. Welch, *RBBM*, 164–68; Christensen, 7/2:156.

Claim: The word *again* in 3 Nephi 14:2 is not supported by ancient “Matthew” documents. Larson, *NABM*, 123. Response:

Even if true, this issue is peripheral, not fundamental. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:170–71.

Is there evidence of an underlying ancient Hebrew text?

Claim: The so-called Hebraism, “I and my brethren,” is also found in Doctrine and Covenants 132. Ashment, *NABM*, 354–55. Response: Doctrine and Covenants 132 was written fourteen years after the publication of the Book of Mormon; this example proves nothing. Gee, *RBBM*, 94–95.

Claim: Bramwell finds a Hebraism in the Book of Mormon’s use of the word *and*, but this could be Joseph Smith’s writing, as in Doctrine and Covenants 132:11. Ashment, *NABM*, 355–56. Response: The Book of Mormon has many examples of confirmed Hebrew syntax not found in Joseph Smith’s early writings. Gee, *RBBM*, 94–95.

Claim: Nibley and others continue to look for Hebraisms and Egyptianisms where they do not exist. Ashment, *NABM*, 343. Response: Ashment focuses on nuances of grammar, ignoring evidence of poetic and prophetic forms, ritual, law, and imagery. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:194–95.

Claim: Hebrew in the Book of Mormon is problematic because it is not mentioned until near the end. Ashment, *NABM*, 331. Response: This is a diversion. Gee, *RBBM*, 83–84.

Claim: The Nephite suppression of everything Jewish would have precluded use of Hebrew. Ashment, *NABM*, 331–32. Response: This is a diversion. Gee, *RBBM*, 83–84.

Claim: The weakness in Nibley’s *Since Cumorah* is illustrated in Allegro’s *The Sacred Mushroom and the Cross*. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 8–9. Response: This anecdote proves nothing. Midgley, *RBBM*, 224 n. 55.

Claim: Wordprint analysis is useless because no known documents by the disputed authors exist outside of the Book of Mormon. Ashment, *NABM*, 372–74. Response: Joseph Smith is one of the disputed authors. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:194.

Question 3:

Does the Book of Mormon make internal errors that betray its lack of antiquity or contain features inconsistent with Joseph Smith's account of its origins?

Are there internal inconsistencies in the Book of Mormon?

Claim: Joseph Smith's inconsistency is shown in the use of the words *Christ* and *messiah*. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 430 n. 44. Response: This is a misreading of the text. Roper, *RBBM*, 367.

Does the Book of Mormon contradict the Bible?

Claim: The New Testament Jesus never claims to be the Father as in the Book of Mormon. Charles, *NABM*, 100. Response: The Old Testament and early Christian writers speak of Jesus as the Father. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:27–28.

Claim: The New Testament never claims that Jesus was the god whom the Israelites in the Old Testament worshipped as Jehovah, as in the Book of Mormon. Charles, *NABM*, 100, 109. Response: The Book of Mormon validates the Bible, not the other way around. Millet, *RBBM*, 198–99. Exegesis of Greek and Hebrew Bible texts refutes this hypothesis. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:103, 114–15; Tanner, 7/2:19–20, 28–31.

Claim: Detailed prophecies of Christ not present in the Bible were fabricated by Joseph Smith. Charles, *NABM*, 90–94. Response: Doctrine is known by revelation. Millet, *RBBM*, 198–99. This assertion is a function of the claimant's world view. Baron, *RBBM* 7/1:95–96. Many detailed prophecies of Christ are found in the Old Testament and Dead Sea Scrolls. Tanner, *RBBM* 7/2:14–16.

Can the text be analyzed objectively?

Claim: The Book of Mormon must be allowed to speak for itself. Charles, *NABM*, 100. Response: Objectivity is noble but impossible. Millet, *RBBM*, 187–88. Narrative theory denies that anyone is free from ideology. Goff, *RBBM* 7/1:180–82. The text yields different data depending on the paradigm the reader begins with. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:148–51, 198–201.

Does the “Mosiah First” theory show that Joseph Smith wrote the Book of Mormon?

Claim: Evidence shows that Joseph Smith began writing at Mosiah after the loss of the 116 pages. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 404–8. Response: The evidence so far has been inconclusive. Skousen, *RBBM*, 135–36.

Claim: The lost manuscript and the replacement text were both 116 pages. This was not coincidental. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 395 n. 1. Response: Joseph Smith could not have known that they would be similar. Skousen, *RBBM*, 137.

Claim: Changes in chapter numbering prove that Joseph Smith began writing again at Mosiah. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 405–8. Response: Part of the premise behind this claim is wrong, and its conclusion is speculative. Skousen, *RBBM*, 137–38.

Claim: The use of *wherefore* and *therefore* confirms Mosian priority. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 408–14. Response: This assertion relies on intuition and the assumption that the words are interchangeable. Skousen, *RBBM*, 140–43.

Claim: Prophecies of Christ and the date of his birth confirm Mosian priority. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 416–17. Response: Evidence from the Book of Mormon shows this to be speculation, not confirmed in the text itself. Tvedtnes and Roper, *RBBM*, 42–43; 364–66.

Claim: The relationship of Nephi’s prophecies concerning Christ and Christ’s visit to America confirms Mosian priority. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 417–18. Response: The text of the Book of Mormon shows this to be speculation. Tvedtnes, *RBBM*, 44–45.

Claim: The evolution of baptism mirrors the New Testament and confirms Mosian priority. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 418–22. Response: Baptism is the same throughout the Book of Mormon. Tvedtnes and Roper, *RBBM*, 45–46; 366–69.

Claim: Development of the word *church* indicates Mosian priority. Metcalfe, *NABM*, 422–23. Response: The so-called development does not exist. Roper, *RBBM*, 369–73.

Question 4:

Can a coherent explanation be given for the Book of Mormon in terms of American antiquities and hard science?

Archaeology

Claim: The Book of Mormon describes advanced metallurgy. Matheny, *NABM*, 285–86. Response: Perhaps Book of Mormon metallurgy was only modest. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 322–24.

Claim: Mesoamerica lacks evidence of tents as mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Matheny, *NABM*, 297–300. Response: The Spaniards described tents among the Aztecs. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 331–34.

Claim: Tents have been found in Mexico but not Mesoamerica. Matheny, *NABM*, 300. Response: War technology would have spread rapidly from Mexico to Mesoamerica. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 334.

Claim: Aztec tents do not prove the Nephites had tents a thousand years earlier. Matheny, *NABM*, 300. Response: The evidence of Aztec tents is literary and helpful. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 335.

Claim: Evidence showing Old World origins for Mesoamerican human skulls is rejected by mainstream biological anthropologists. Matheny, *NABM*, 310 n. 25. Response: Wiercinski's conclusions are unorthodox, but his work is not poorly done. The conclusions regarding cranial morphology remain largely undemonstrated. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 348.

Claim: Based on archaeological evidence, Santa Rosa cannot be Zarahemla. Matheny, *NABM*, 315–16. Response: The evidence is far from complete, and possible explanations abound. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 348–53.

Claim: Proposed locations of Zarahemla and Sidom do not fit the Book of Mormon description. Matheny, *NABM*, 316. Response: We cannot make conclusions about the size and importance of the two suggested sites. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 353–54.

Claim: The Olmecs were too late to be the Jaredites. Matheny, *NABM*, 318. Response: It is reasonable that the Jaredites could have been one element among many in the Olmec civilization. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 355–57.

Claim: Carbon-14 dating puts the possibility of Jaredites at 2400 B.C. at the earliest. Matheny, *NABM*, 318–19. Response: Current C-14 methods push the date back as far as 3765 B.C. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 316–18.

Claim: Sorenson's suggested model requires major changes in our current understanding of Mesoamerica. Matheny, *NABM*, 321–22. Response: Change occurs in science as our understanding grows. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 359–61.

Metallurgy

Claim: Sorenson's proposed sites contain little of the metals mentioned in the Book of Mormon. Matheny, *NABM*, 287. Response: The probable mining methods used by the Nephites provide possible explanations. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 323–24.

Claim: There is no evidence that metallurgy was practiced before 900 B.C. Matheny, *NABM*, 287–88. Response: Linguists find the word for "metal" as far back as 1500 B.C. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 320.

Claim: No metal-working sites have been found in Mesoamerica, but they do exist in the Old World. Matheny, *NABM*, 284–88. Response: Mesoamerican archaeology is fifty years behind Old World archaeology. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 320.

Claim: Metal working typically leaves archaeological evidence, but none has been found. Matheny, *NABM*, 284. Response: Archaeological evidence of known metallurgy is incomplete. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 322.

Claim: Olmec tombs yield no metal artifacts indicating advanced metallurgy. Matheny, *NABM*, 288. Response: There are few known Olmec tombs and we cannot assume they would contain practical and scarce metals. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 321, 326.

Claim: Mesoamericans had no steel before the Spaniards. Matheny, *NABM*, 285–86. Response: Perhaps Nephi's steel sword was copied in form, not substance. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 324–29.

Claim: Metal objects were not manufactured in ancient Mesoamerica. Matheny, *NABM*, 290. Response: This conclusion is not based on firm evidence. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 326–27.

Flora and Fauna

Claim: No trace of Old World plants supports the location of Zarahemla in Mesoamerica. Matheny, *NABM*, 301–2. Response: Other sources identify a substantial number of Old World plants in America. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 338–42.

Claim: There are no Old World olives, corn, or barley in Mesoamerica. Matheny, *NABM*, 300–302. Response: There is no reason to believe that the plants Nephi brought survived up to the present. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 337–39.

Claim: Sorenson suggests an alternative list of animals that would have violated the dietary code of Moses. Matheny, *NABM*, 302–4. Response: Scholars dispute the specifics of the dietary code at the time of Lehi. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 342–43.

Claim: The Book of Mormon people would not have mistaken a deer for a horse. Matheny, *NABM*, 307. Response: There is a Hebraic linguistic reason for calling a *deer* a *horse*. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 345–46.

Claim: None of the horse remains found in Maya strata were contemporaneous with the Maya. Matheny, *NABM*, 305–10.

Response: Evidence of horse bones dating to Mesoamerican times has been ignored. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 344.

Claim: Mesoamerican art showing humans riding deer is cultic, not evidence that Mesoamericans rode deer. Matheny, *NABM*, 307–9. Response: Though incomplete, the evidence makes the idea plausible. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 346–47.

Is a Book of Mormon geography possible?

Claim: Speculations about Book of Mormon geography are faulty because the geographers accept the Book of Mormon as true before they examine the evidence they write about. Hutchinson, *NABM*, 10–11. Response: This is a straw man argument. Midgley, *RBBM*, 224 n. 55. What this criticism means is that the geographers' paradigms are different from the claimant's own. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:172. Assuming historicity allows one to more easily see historically consistent phenomena. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:176–77.

Claim: The cardinal directions in the Book of Mormon must be the same as ours. Matheny, *NABM*, 277–79. Response: Directional concepts are accidents of culture and history. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 305–13; Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:172.

Claim: Tomb 12 at Rio Azul indicates that ancient Mesoamericans used cardinal directions. Matheny, *NABM*, 279. Response: The findings are incomplete, and space is divided into eight sections. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 314 and n. 37.

Claim: The Yucatan Peninsula is ignored in Sorenson's model. Matheny, *NABM*, 280. Response: The Yucatan Peninsula does not fit the Book of Mormon description of the land. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 314–15.

Demographics

Claim: The traditional Latter-day Saint view is that all people in the Book of Mormon descended from Mulek or Lehi. Kunich, *NABM*, 231–32. Response: The traditional view is not held officially by the Church. Smith, *RBBM*, 261–70.

Claim: The traditional view is supported by the Book of Mormon text itself. Kunich, *NABM*, 256–59. Response: This is not a careful reading of the text. Smith, *RBBM*, 261–63. Some passages from the Book of Mormon discredit this claim. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:165–68.

Claim: The plain meaning of the Book of Mormon text precludes mixing of Jaredites and Nephites. Kunich, *NABM*, 264. Response: This is an assumed “plain meaning.” Smith, *RBBM*, 261.

Claim: Other large cultures would have been noted in the Book of Mormon. Kunich, *NABM*, 262. Response: This claim is based on what the Book of Mormon does not say. Smith, *RBBM*, 261.

Claim: The Book of Mormon would presumably mention any native cultures. Kunich, *NABM*, 262. Response: This interpretation is based on presumption. Smith, *RBBM*, 261.

Claim: The curse of the Lamanites was hereditary. Kunich, *NABM*, 263. Response: Kunich confuses prophecy with scientific fact. Smith, *RBBM*, 261–62.

Claim: No other inhabitants lived in America because of the Lord’s promise to Lehi. Kunich, *NABM*, 261–62. Response: The Book of Mormon neither denies nor disproves such a possibility. Smith, *RBBM*, 264–70.

Claim: The Book of Mormon makes clear that the Jaredites had a complex civilization. Matheny, *NABM*, 317. Response: This is an assumption, not a plain rendering of the text. Sorenson, *RBBM*, 354–55.

Claim: B. H. Roberts believed there were no other people in America other than Lehitites, Mulekites, and Jaredites. Kunich, *NABM*, 261. Response: This may be a misreading of Roberts. Smith, *RBBM*, 267. There is no consideration of the basis of Roberts’s belief. Christensen, *RBBM* 7/2:164.

Claim: Up to A.D. 1650, world population growth was a steady .04%. Kunich, *NABM*, 241. Response: Other sources show great

fluctuations over the past several millennia. Smith, *RBBM*, 272–74.

Claim: Famine, disease, and war are primary factors in population growth. Kunich, *NABM*, 241. Response: Infant mortality and birth rates were the principal factors. Smith, *RBBM*, 270–72.

Claim: Historical population growth rates can be accurately estimated. Kunich, *NABM*, 245–56. Response: Population dynamics are far more complex than earlier thought. Smith, *RBBM*, 277–80.

Claim: At a growth rate of .04%, Lehi's posterity would have totaled 54 after 980 years in America. Kunich, *NABM*, 246–51. Response: A .01% growth rate would have produced that many people after 60 years. Smith, *RBBM*, 287–88.

Claim: The high number of war fatalities in Alma 2 would have required a 2% growth rate in the Nephite population. Kunich, *NABM*, 250. Response: The growth rate could have been 1.25% and still have been within the realm of plausibility. Smith, *RBBM*, 289–91.

Claim: Warfare among the Lehites would have caused an even slower growth rate. Kunich, *NABM*, 256. Response: Constant warfare did not slow the growth rate among the Greeks. Smith, *RBBM*, 276–77.

Claim: It is impossible to have had 230,000 warriors in Mormon's army. Kunich, *NABM*, 258–89. Response: Published population tables allow for estimates of 1.6 million people. Smith, *RBBM*, 292–94.

Claim: A high growth rate due to divine intervention is not alluded to in the Book of Mormon. Kunich, *NABM*, 252–54. Response: Current historical demographics explain the high population growth. Smith, *RBBM*, 261–62.

Claim: The Lamanites could not have outnumbered the Nephites. Kunich, *NABM*, 253. Response: This reflects simplistic, outdated notions. Smith, *RBBM*, 287–88.

Question 5:
Are the Book of Mormon
Witnesses credible?

Are the Three and Eight Witnesses credible?

Claim: Historical evidence leaves the question open as to physical reality of the gold plates. Ashment, *NABM*, 332 n. 10.
Response: Hearsay of apostate Warren Parrish ignores the testimony of nine witnesses. Gee, *RBBM*, 111.