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It is hoped that this information will help all interested people to "come unto Christ" (Jacob 1:7) and to understand and take more seriously these ancient witnesses of the atonement of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The principal purpose of the FARMS Review of Books is to help serious readers make informed choices and judgments about books published, primarily on the Book of Mormon. The evaluations are intended to encourage reliable scholarship on the Book of Mormon.

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Editor's Introduction
Triptych (Inspired by Hieronymus Bosch)

Daniel C. Peterson

With this issue of the Review, we modify its title but continue our numbering of volumes. The name Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, we found, defined too narrowly what we wanted to cover. Although the attention of the FARMS Review of Books will presumably remain overwhelmingly directed to books about the Book of Mormon, there are other topics relevant to the interests and training of those affiliated with FARMS (e.g., temples, the book of Abraham, formative events in early Latter-day Saint history, anti-Mormon assaults on Latter-day Saint belief, perhaps even some books that do not deal directly with Mormonism at all) that we will now be able to cover without feeling that we are sneaking them into a periodical to which, by titular definition, they do not really belong. We have also taken the opportunity to alter the manner in which we structure the contents of the Review. No longer will reviews appear in simple alphabetical order. In a bid to make our efforts more user-friendly, we shall arrange them by subject (though such categorization will never be an exact science), and only thereafter by the name of the reviewed item's author.

One thing I can promise. As long as I remain editor, the "Editor's Introduction" will continue to be a place where I offer my observations on passing phenomena germane to Mormonism to an audience that, by and large, probably wishes I would keep them to myself. But hey, the opportunity to spout off as the mood strikes me is one of the few compensations I receive for editing this thing.

Herewith, accordingly, comments on a trio of loosely related topics:
I. "What about Bob?"

Straw person fallacy: Restating another’s argument in such a manner as to weaken the original and proceeding to criticize the weakened version (the straw person), hoping that others will think that the weakened version is the argument of your opponent.

John D. Mullen

Professor Stephen Ricks and I published a volume in 1992 entitled *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints*. At one point in that book, we had occasion to examine an amusing argument from the inimitable Robert McKay, of Oklahoma’s ever-entertaining Utah Missions, Inc. The passage runs as follows:

Nor has Robert McKay given us any reason to accept his cute syllogism, offered as a demonstration of alleged Latter-day Saint inconsistency on this issue: “1. Christian churches are false. 2. But Mormonism is Christian. 3. Therefore Mormonism is false.”

What the Lord told Joseph Smith in the grove was that the churches and creeds of 1820 were defective and distorted by error. He did not say that they were entirely and utterly wrong (since they preserved much truth), nor did he say that each and every Christian church would always be wrong. Nor did he include the as-yet-unorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in his judgment. He did not say that Christianity, as such, is false. There is nothing logically wrong with saying that the churches of 1820 were incorrect on

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1 John D. Mullen, *Hard Thinking: The Reintroduction of Logic to Everyday Life* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 143. Mullen’s “straw person fallacy” is, of course, simply a politically correct version of the venerable “straw man fallacy.”


many important issues ("corrupt"), and then saying that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (organized in 1830) is true.\textsuperscript{4}

The point, of course, is merely that a divine declaration on the state of affairs in 1820 cannot be used without caution to define the state of affairs in 1830 and beyond. That the churches and creeds available before the restoration of the gospel were inadequate cannot seriously be construed to bar God from establishing a Church thereafter with which he could be "well pleased" (D&C 1:30). No contradiction arises if God is relatively displeased with the situation in 1820, and relatively satisfied in 1830. One could obviously go even further: The Lord’s statement to Joseph Smith did not say that the churches he was criticizing were to be condemned because they were Christian. Their shortcomings resided in other aspects. Thus the mere fact that the restored Church is Christian too does not implicate it in God’s judgment; only participation in those churches’ faults would do so.

Perhaps an analogous (but manifestly incorrect) argument will illustrate what I mean: The great astronomer Nicolaus Copernicus looked at previous theories of the solar system, almost all of them variations of the Ptolemaic approach, and, deciding that they were wrong, proposed his own. Subsequently, his heliocentric or sun-centered conception of the solar system, with modifications by Johannes Kepler and others, has swept all rivals from the field. But let us imagine an astronomical equivalent of Robert McKay, who refuses to accept the idea that the earth revolves around the sun. He searches desperately for something with which to discredit Copernicus, but has a very difficult time because, frankly, the evidence is all against him. Then, one day, he realizes that Copernicus’s position is self-contradictory! Triumphantlly, he trots out a positively lethal anti-Copernican syllogism: “1. Theories of the solar system are false. 2. But Copernicus’s theory is a theory of the solar system. 3. Therefore Copernicus’s theory is false.” The world is stunned. Mortified scientists hang their heads in humiliation. Modern astronomy crashes to the ground in ruins, and subsequent investigations reveal that Neil Armstrong’s fraudulent

\textsuperscript{4} Peterson and Ricks, \textit{Offenders for a Word}, 170–71.
walk on the moon was indeed filmed on a NASA sound stage, just as the Flat Earth Society had long maintained.

What is wrong with this? Obviously, the problem lies in the translation of Copernicus’s actual opinion into the first premise of the argument. Copernicus certainly did not think that all theories of the solar system were and ever would be false simply because they were theories of the solar system, any more than Joseph Smith thought that all Christian churches were and ever would be false simply by virtue of their being Christian. Otherwise, it would have been as foolish and self-contradictory for Copernicus to propound a new account of the solar system as it was, according to Robert McKay, for Joseph Smith to found a new church.

I had thought that my argument was fairly clear. (I leave it to the reader to determine whether Mr. McKay’s misreading—one might call his style of reasoning “virtual rationality,” a crudely faked imitation of logic—is the product of dishonesty or incompetence.) Subsequent experience, though, has convinced me that I was naive. Picking up a 1994 book entitled Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend, I was astonished to find in it evidence of a talent for misunderstanding arguments that can only be described as awe-inspiring. (The book’s authors, Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, are the principal figures at an operation called “Mormonism Research Ministry,” based in El Cajon, California, which, among other things, actively fights Mormonism in the former Soviet Union and distributes hostile propaganda at the dedication of Latter-day Saint temples.)

“Drs. Peterson and Ricks,” report McKeever and Johnson, “attempted to downplay the severity of Christianity’s depravity by claiming that Smith merely referred to the local churches at the time of his youth.” And in support of this reading of Offenders for a Word, they quote it as follows:

What the Lord told Joseph Smith in the grove was that the churches and creeds of 1820 were defective and distorted by error. He did not say that they were entirely and utterly wrong (since they preserved much truth), nor did he say that each and every Christian church would always be wrong. . . . He did not say that Christianity, as such, is false. There is nothing logically wrong with saying that the churches of 1820 were
incorrect on many important issues ("corrupt"), and then saying that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (organized in 1830) is true.

"Was Smith," demand McKeever and Johnson, "really referring only to the churches of 1820?" Obviously not. "To draw such a conclusion undermines the very existence of the LDS Church as well as goes against the pronounced statements of many Mormon leaders." And then, as the coup de grace, McKeever and Johnson provide several quotations from Elder Bruce R. McConkie that are clearly "contrary to what these professors claim." 5

But "these professors," I can testify with some authority, have never even thought of such an argument as McKeever and Johnson attribute to us. Where, in the passage that they quote from us, is there even the slightest reference to "local churches"? Or to "locality"? Where is there any mention of geography at all? Why do McKeever and Johnson omit Robert McKay's argument, to which we are responding? Why do they give no context for our statement? Why do they omit an important sentence ("Nor did he include the as-yet-unorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in his judgment") that works against their misreading? Do they really think that we are referring to 1820 as distinct from, say, 1819 and 1814? (That year was chosen only for the obvious reason that it was the year of the First Vision, and, thus, the year of the statement under examination. But the Christianity of 1820 was not hermetically sealed off from what went before; indisputably it included such elements of older date as the papacy, the Nicene Creed, Calvin's Institutes, the notion of sola scriptura, and the philosophical theology of St. Thomas Aquinas. These too, I do not doubt, fell under the divine judgment.)

Such a misguided response to our argument, I thought, said a lot about Bill McKeever, Eric Johnson, and the methods they use to assault Latter-day Saint beliefs. Imagine my surprise, however, when I ran across exactly the same quotation from Offenders for a

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Word with exactly the same omissions and exactly the same mis-
reading in yet another anti-Mormon tome. This one, entitled Rea-
soning from the Scriptures with the Mormons and published in
1995, was written by Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine. (They are
affiliated with southern California’s so-called Christian Research
Institute, a group founded by the late “Dr.” Walter Martin and
currently led by Ed Decker’s enthusiastic supporter, Hank
Hanegraaff.)6

Following their quotation from Offenders for a Word, Rhodes
and Bodine devastate us with an absolutely irrefutable point that
has no discernible relevance to anything we have ever thought,
said, or written: “This revisionist line of reasoning,” they
announce, “fails because, if this were so, all Joseph Smith had to
do was move to a neighboring community and seek out a minister
who wasn’t corrupt. It wouldn’t have been necessary to com-
pletely ‘restore’ the church of Jesus Christ on earth by founding
the Mormon church.”7

Why, I wonder, do I sometimes feel like a straw man? Profes-
sor William Hamblin and I, who have been reading and respon-
ding to this sort of stuff for years, occasionally laugh about a film
that might be made of our encounters. We like to call it Bill and
Dan’s Excellent Adventure in Anti-Mormon Zombie Hell.

6 On “Dr.” Martin’s astounding career, see Robert L. Brown and Rose-
mary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, vol. 3 (Mesa, AZ: Brownsworth,
1986). For Ed Decker and Hank Hanegraaff, see Daniel C. Peterson, “P. T.
Barnum Redivivus,” a review of Decker’s Complete Handbook on Mormonism,
Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, vol. 4
(Mesa, AZ: Brownsworth, 1995), provide an interesting look at Decker and a few
of his pals.

7 Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures with
the Mormons (Eugene: Harvest House, 1995), 60. One’s suspicion that Rhodes
and Bodine have not really looked at the original passage increases when one
observes, in their endnoted reference to Offenders for a Word (p. 399 n. 42), that
they get the subtitle slightly wrong and that their citation of the page reference
is inaccurate by a factor of forty pages.
II. “Why Does Baloney Reject the Grinder!”  

No stronger defender of the faith in modern times has arisen than the late Dr. [sic] Walter Martin, founder of the Christian Research Institute, who publicly challenged, rebuked, and debated the false cults and false teachers of the last generation.

We stand therefore with those who have gone before us and say, “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men” (2 Corinthians 5:11).

Ed Decker

In the issue of the Review immediately prior to this one, I critiqued the notorious Ed Decker’s quite awful Decker’s Complete Handbook on Mormonism. Thereupon, urged to it by a zealous reader in California (who had actually already contacted Mr. Decker’s headquarters in Issaquah, Washington, and who now informed me that “the ball was in my court”), I sent a FAX to Ed Decker on 17 October 1995, offering to debate him publicly.

On the last day of November 1995, I received a polite letter from Mr. Decker declining my offer.

Are you surprised?

III. The Joseph Seminar

It would be arrogant and foolish for the layperson to ignore or dismiss the work of the historical scholar. However, it is by no means too much for the layperson to ask the historical scholar, who is so keen on understanding human life in its cultural context, to have a sense of the relativity of historical scholarship itself. Once the “relativizer has been relativized,” it will no

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8 William F. Buckley, Jr., on why Robert F. Kennedy had rejected an invitation to appear on Buckley’s television program, Firing Line (quoted in Time [3 November 1967]: 70).
9 Decker, Decker’s Complete Handbook on Mormonism, 47.
11 I am indebted to my friend and colleague William J. Hamblin for this felicitous phrase.
longer be possible for the tribe of historical scholars to take a superior and arrogant attitude toward the members of religious communities, as if such communities were the only ones with biases.

C. Stephen Evans

A recent issue of the relatively liberal magazine *Bible Review* contains a pair of interesting articles by, respectively, Professor Luke T. Johnson of the Candler School of Theology at Emory University and Professor Baruch Halpern of Pennsylvania State University. Each article confronts and criticizes tendencies toward extreme skepticism in contemporary biblical studies. But those who have followed the present *Review* over the past several years will need little help to see a number of similarities between some of the controversies that have swirled around it and the disputes that wrack the world of biblical studies at large. The articles also reminded me of some other things that have come to my attention in recent months, items that I thought might be of interest to readers of the *Review*.

Professor Johnson's article focuses largely, though not exclusively, on the so-called "Jesus Seminar," a group founded in 1985 to address the question of what we can know about the historical Jesus of Nazareth, and to make its positions known to the general public via the mass media. By any account, the Seminar—which began with thirty "fellows" and now has approximately two hundred—has been spectacularly successful in the latter endeavor. Its "reports"—liberally spiced with the "scandalous sound bites" so beloved by the mass media—have been prominently displayed on the covers of popular magazines and on the front pages of major newspapers. Its most recent book, *The Five

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The introduction, has been a best-seller. Paul Verhoeven, the Dutch-born director of such film classics as Robocop, Total Recall, Basic Instinct, and Showgirls, is a fellow of the Seminar and has been associated with it almost since its inception. He is now writing a script about the life of Christ which will be at least partially based on the work of the Seminar (and on which he has actually presented a paper to the other fellows). Late last night, as I was getting ready for bed, I flipped on our bedroom television set to a national cable channel and, of all things, caught the last minute or two of an interview with John Dominic Crossan, a former Catholic priest and a cofounder of the Jesus Seminar. He was explaining that the definitive discovery of the dead body of Jesus of Nazareth, were such a thing ever to happen, would have no real impact upon true Christianity. But, interestingly, he was not entirely forthright about his position: The Jesus Seminar determined early in 1995, by a nearly unanimous vote, that the resurrection of Christ did not happen. "It’s more likely, the Seminar fellows decided, that Jesus’ crucified corpse ‘rotted in some unknown grave,’ as a press release by the Santa Rosa, California-based group put it. Consumption by scavenger dogs, a pet theory of Seminar co-chair John Dominic Crossan, was another possible fate for Jesus’ body, the fellows agreed."

The Jesus Seminar has been the most visible component of what has been termed "the third quest for the historical Jesus." The first began in the mid-eighteenth century, when intellectuals of the Enlightenment tried to sort out and distinguish the attractive ethical teachings of Jesus from what they regarded as the quaint or pernicious superstitions (such as the story of the Savior’s walking

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18 Craig L. Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?" in Jesus Under Fire: Modern Scholarship Reinterprets the Historical Jesus, ed. Michael J. Wilkins and J. P. Moreland (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 18–28, taking a slightly different approach, views the Jesus Seminar as distinct from a more moderate "third quest," rather than as a radical element within it.
on the water, or his transformation of water into wine) that had come to encrust true Christianity like barnacles on an old ship’s hull. (Thomas Jefferson’s famous revision of the Bible—he is said to have used a razor blade to cut references to the supernatural out of his copy—should be seen as an example of this process.) These eighteenth-century writers, not surprisingly, came up with a very eighteenth-century Jesus, a kind of philosophe who gave his life for the cause of liberty, equality, and fraternity. The quest then really picked up momentum in the nineteenth century, continuing until it was brought to ruin by Albert Schweitzer’s classic The Quest of the Historical Jesus (originally published in 1906, in German, as Von Reimarus zu Wrede), which argued that the real Jesus was not the humanistic ethical teacher portrayed by liberal theologians, but rather an apocalyptic preacher with whom they would have been extremely uncomfortable. Nowadays, it is generally recognized that the “first quest” probably tells us more about the questers, about the optimistic liberalism of the nineteenth century, for example, than about the actual, first-century Palestinian Jesus. “But it was not only each epoch that found its reflection in Jesus; each individual created Him in accordance with his own character. There is no historical task which so reveals a man’s true self as the writing of a Life of Jesus.”19 The turn-of-the-century theologian George Tyrrell recognized exactly this in the writings on the subject of Adolf von Harnack, one of the very greatest figures in Leben-Jesu-Forschung as well as in the historiography of Christian doctrine. “The Christ that Harnack sees, looking back through nineteen centuries of Catholic darkness, is only the reflection,” wrote Tyrrell, “of a Liberal Protestant face, seen at the bottom of a deep well.”20

The second “quest for the historical Jesus” occurred in the 1950s and 1960s, under the influence of Rudolf Bultmann and his extremely skeptical school. Bultmann was a German existentialist, and he believed that, since they certainly could not be taken as real history, all of the stories about Jesus had to be “demytholog-

gized" in order to find their real meaning—which turned out to be existentialism. (One is reminded of Philo of Alexandria, the important first-century Jewish Middle Platonist who subjected the Old Testament to a close allegorical reading, and discovered that it really taught [surprise!] Middle Platonism.) The second quest cannot be given so conclusive an end-date as the first quest, for the simple reason that no Albert Schweitzer arose to give it a definitive quietus. In many senses, it lives on even today in some circles. But existentialism is rather out of fashion lately, and the "third quest," we can now see, is unmistakably distinct.

With its exceptionally distrustful approach to the subject—it accepts as authentic only about eighteen percent of the sayings traditionally ascribed to Jesus and seems to regard any scriptural claims about him as being false unless they can be decisively proven otherwise—the Jesus Seminar has given a very negative twist to the current "quest." This, of course, has aroused considerable controversy. And not merely a theoretical one. For virtually all of what serious Christians believe and do in the present and hope for in the future is tied up with accounts of Jesus that were written in the distant past. "Whatever else Christianity means or ever meant," wrote G. K. Chesterton, speaking, no doubt, for many hundreds of millions of Christians before and since, "it obviously means or meant an interference with the physical sorrows of humanity by the physical appearance of Divinity. If it does not mean that, I cannot conceive what it does mean. There seems to be no point in the story."21

The Jesus Seminar relies a great deal on extracanonical writings, especially on the Gospel of Thomas, which, although it dates from several centuries after the time of Christ and exists only in a Coptic translation from a presumed Greek original, is regarded by some scholars (on the basis, it must be observed, of "no actual evidence") as a very early witness to primitive Christian teaching.22 This fascination with Thomas and other such documents is one of the things that leaves Professor Johnson, in contemplating the work of the Seminar, struck by "the way the hermeneutics of suspicion is applied to virtually everything in the New Testament

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22 The quoted phrase is from Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?" 23. See also Hays, "The Corrected Jesus," 44.
and to virtually nothing outside it."23 For the Jesus Seminar also places a great deal of confidence, when looking at the canonical gospels, in what is sometimes called the "criterion of dissimilarity," according to which most statements attributed to Jesus in the four canonical gospels must be rejected because they could have originated in the early church or might have been similar to the rabbinic teachings of Jesus' time. "The idea," says one critic of the Seminar, "is that we can only be sure of those sayings of Jesus that fit with neither the early church nor first-century Judaism. (By the same reasoning, future historians would judge as authentic words of Newt Gingrich only those statements that are dissimilar from those of other Republicans.)"24

Such methodology seems breathtaking in its silliness. Even for me, believing as I do in an apostasy from the primitive Christian church, it is preposterous to imagine that the Christians of the second, third, and fourth centuries taught nothing in common with their Founder. It is inconceivable that they would have been willing to die for someone whose teachings they had utterly and absolutely repudiated. Professor Craig Blomberg makes a very cogent point in this regard, when he observes that such a scenario requires the assumption that someone, about a generation removed from the events in question, radically transformed the authentic information about Jesus that was circulating at that time, superimposed a body of material four times as large, fabricated almost entirely out of whole cloth, while the church suffered sufficient collective amnesia to accept the transformation as legitimate. . . . [But] there is no known parallel in the history of religion to such a radical transformation of a famous teacher or leader in so short a period of time, namely, during the lives of eyewitnesses of his or her life and work, and no identifiable stimulus among the followers of Jesus sufficient to create such a change.25

23 Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 23.
24 Evans, "Can the New Jesus Save Us?" 6.
25 Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?" 22.
Nor do I see why Jesus’ teachings need be totally unique.26 (One is reminded of Fawn Brodie’s ludicrous complaint that Joseph Smith offered “no new Sermon on the Mount, no new saga of redemption.”27 As if there were something wrong with the old ones.) But the Jesus Seminar’s procedure, by purporting to destroy what historical evidence we do possess about the life of Christ, clears the way for the groundless fantasizing of Crossan and his like. (There is no more actual evidence for his “scavenger dogs” than there is for the proposition that Jesus was really abducted by space aliens.)

Professor Johnson criticizes the Jesus Seminar for its “decade of self-promotion” and “media manipulation,” a combination of “messianism and hucksterism in equal measure,” as well as for “the lack of true critical scholarship running—in varying degrees, to be sure—through all [its] publications.”28 (Duke University’s Richard B. Hays, remarking on the pompous dedication of the Seminar’s book *The Five Gospels* to Galileo, Jefferson, and pioneer life-of-Jesus writer D. F. Strauss, wonders why the circus showman P. T. Barnum wasn’t included as well.)29 Some of us, reading Dr. Johnson’s description of “media manipulation,” should really be pardoned for being immediately overcome by an intense feeling of *déjà vu*. We have seen this before. More than one of us has noted, on the part of certain dissident critics of traditional Latter-day Saint belief, “an attempt to win in the arena of public relations and rhetoric what they are apparently unable to win in the arena of evidence and analysis.”30 Unfortunately, the

26 The late literary critic Edmund Wilson argues from the same baseless assumption in his embarrassing *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (Glasgow: Collins, 1985).


media are prone to be manipulated by reductionist critics of religion because, as a number of studies have shown, print and broadcast journalists tend to be secularized, and even religiously tone-deaf.31 (Non-Christian religions, especially Native American and East Asian ones, seem to have certain advantages, but this is almost certainly because of secular allegiance to the ideal of multiculturalism, rather than owing to any great appreciation for such faith systems in themselves.) Additionally, I suspect, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may be an especially good media target because of the reflexively hostile attitude held by many journalists toward large corporations, among which they reckon the Church, and toward sociopolitical conservatism, which they see embodied in the Church as well as in its attendant culture. Thus critics of Christianity in general and Mormonism in particular may well have an innate advantage when fighting for their positions in the media. This, I am sure, is why they often choose to do so.

Still, the second of Professor Johnson’s criticisms of the Jesus Seminar (its “lack of true critical scholarship”), is almost certainly the more important. (He would, perhaps, have enjoyed the very revealing remark made by the revisionist cultural-Mormon historian Dale Morgan to Fawn Brodie: “We are only critical,” Morgan commented, “about the things we don’t want to believe.”)32 Professor Johnson contends that the judgments, by fellows of the Seminar and like-minded writers, of what is and attempts to deal with Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/1 (1994). It is highly unfortunate that the Signature press release, a revealing and embarrassing document, was evidently ignored by all the media outlets to which it was sent. Nevertheless, one enterprising pair of writers (who shall remain nameless) composed a reply to it, entitled “Signature Author Fails to Respond to Critique,” which they sent out to interested parties. For related discussions, see Daniel C. Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Questions to Legal Answers,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): vii-lxxvi; Daniel C. Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/1 (1994): v-xii; Daniel C. Peterson, “Text and Context,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/1 (1994): 524-62.


what is not authentically historical in the gospel narratives are based on ‘circular and subjective criteria.’

A good example of this can be found in the quite contradictory works of two prominent contemporary radical New Testament scholars, both of whom share a commitment to what is called ‘historical-critical method’ and to releasing modern men and women from the chains of ecclesiastical dogmatism, and both of whom are fellows of the Jesus Seminar. One, Burton Mack, depicts Jesus as a wandering Cynic, a sage who disdained the conventional religion of his day. New Testament passages that represent Jesus as affirming the Law of Moses, says Mack, are fictional later creations of the Christian church, which, in a deliberate effort at something like Weber’s ‘routinization of charisma,’ sought to tame, to domesticate, the free-spirited, rather hippielike historical Jesus. For Michael Goulder, by contrast, Jesus was a pious Jew. Positive statements about the Law of Moses, therefore, are historically authentic, while any statements critical of the Law must have been placed on the lips of Jesus by disciples of the apostle Paul who were seeking to de-Judaize their new religion.

It is this kind of thing that leads Professor Johnson to comment that, throughout much of the most radical current scholarship on the life of Jesus, ‘there is much assertion, little argument.’

Professor Hays, alluding to the large element of subjectivism in the supposedly scientific magnum opus of Robert Funk and his colleagues, The Five Gospels, declares that “What the members of the Jesus Seminar have done, in effect, is merely to offer us an anthology of their favorite Jesus-sayings.”

Such criticisms may come as a shock to some readers, who have been led to think that the radical skeptics are actually in the

33 Johnson, ‘The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus,’ 25.
34 I draw this example from Evans, “Can the New Jesus Save Us?” 8.
35 Johnson, ‘The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus,’ 22. “Marcus Borg [a fellow of the Jesus Seminar] cites a poll he took among like-minded colleagues as his most substantial reason for seeking a ‘non-eschatological’ Jesus.” Compare Robert W. Funk, Bernard B. Scott, and James R. Butts, The Parables of Jesus, Red Letter Edition: A Report of the Jesus Seminar (Sonoma, CA: Polebridge, 1988); On the back cover of that book are four extremely enthusiastic endorsements—all from fellows of the Jesus Seminar who are thus, in fact, effectively contributors to the volume itself.
mainstream, rather than on the fringes, of modern New Testament scholarship. (Subscribers to one quarterly periodical, for example, which rather impishly continues to style itself "A Journal of Mormon Thought," have been treated, under its current masters, to at least five articles from fellows of the Jesus Seminar—none of whom are Mormons—in somewhat less than the last three years.) Many lay readers have, no doubt, supposed that radical revisionist scholarship must, surely, rest on a firm foundation of, oh, maybe spectacular archaeological finds, or new manuscript discoveries, or revolutionary new understandings of esoteric Greek participl es, or some such thing. They may have suspected that those who resist recent efforts to recast Jesus as a simple Mediterranean peasant, or a wandering Cynic, or a gay magician, are simply obscurantists, despairingly conducting a hopeless rear-guard defense against the advancing forces of Science and Truth. It may surprise them to learn that there are many scholars, including some very good and highly respected authorities, who think that the situation is precisely the reverse. I well recall, from a summer seminar at Princeton in 1994, the unexpectedly negative reaction


38 This point is forcibly made by Blomberg, "Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?" 18-20. Evans, "Can the New Jesus Save Us?" 8, uses another argument from Burton Mack, along with some elementary probability calculations, to illustrate the extremely conjectural nature of one of Professor Mack's central claims.
that the mere mention of the Jesus Seminar received from my colleagues there—none of whom could even remotely be considered "conservative." One, indeed, who was (incidentally) a widely published expert on the Gospel of Thomas and, so far as I can determine, an agnostic, had been invited to join the Jesus Seminar. He had, he told me, attended one session, but had left in disgust.

The eminent German scholar Hans Dieter Betz, too, remarks that "the presumed presence of Cynics in the Galilean society in which Jesus lived is mostly fanciful conjecture. The evidence for Cynicism [by which, of course, he means not an attitude, but the ancient philosophical movement that went by that name] is limited to Gadara and Tyre, Hellenistic cities outside Galilee."39 Professor Gerald O'Collins labels Burton Mack's work on the life of Jesus—which, along with that of the ubiquitous Crossan, advances the Cynic hypothesis—a "distortion."40 Professor Hays terms the theories of the Jesus Seminar "idiosyncratic," "bizarre," full of "fantasy" and "circular reasoning," and laments that "their attempt to present these views as 'the assured results of critical scholarship' is—one must say it—reprehensible deception."41

So it would seem that at least some ultraliberal scholars of New Testament subjects may not be perfectly objective evidence-processors. But perhaps this is a disease restricted solely to New Testament studies? Not at all. Professor Baruch Halpern, a leading Jewish scholar who is not known as a defender of conservative

39 Cited by O'Collins, Christology, 217 n. 18. On pp. 222–23, Professor O'Collins offers John Elliott, Martin Hengel, Bruce Malina, Jerome Neyrey, and Gerd Theissen as representatives of "the best research on the socio-historical context of Jesus and the first Christians," contrasting their work with "the worst of such research" (under which rubric he mentions only Jesus Seminar fellow Burton Mack). Raymond Brown, The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels (New York: Doubleday, 1994), will serve as another good example of a major scholar, hardly a fundamentalist, who accepts the essential accuracy of the canonical gospels. John P. Meier, author of A Marginal Jew: Rethinking the Historical Jesus (New York: Doubleday, 1991), might serve as another. Prominent scholars including W. A. Meeks, N. T. Wright, J. Fitzmyer, L. S. Cunningham, and J. D. G. Dunn have also publicly criticized the Jesus Seminar.

40 O'Collins, Christology, 223 n. 28.

41 Hays, "The Corrected Jesus," 44–47. On p. 44, Professor Hays is a bit more gentle, expressing only "some suspicion . . . concerning the candor of the editors" of The Five Gospels.
theological positions, points in his turn to what he calls “minimalists” in the scholarship on the Hebrew Bible (naming among them, specifically, Philip R. Davies, Thomas L. Thompson, John Van Seters, and the late Gösta W. Ahlström, with whom I once spent a pleasant afternoon at the Little Big Horn in Montana). Professor Halpern observes that the recent discovery of a ninth-century B.C.E. inscription at Tel Dan—the first reference to the House of David in an extrabiblical source—“is causing extraordinary contortions among scholars who have maintained that the Bible’s history of the early Israelite monarchy is simply fiction.” (They find it “embarrassing,” he says.)

One scholar has gone so far as to suggest that the inscription may be a fake, presumably salted in the tell by some desperate biblical literalist. Other scholars in this camp have advanced arguments no less far-fetched in an attempt somehow to eliminate the reference to David—arguing, for example, that the three Semitic letters forming David’s name should really be read as “uncle” or “kettle.”

(Faithful readers of this Review will recall John Gee’s description of some strikingly similar antics from a couple of years ago, in connection with the book of Abraham.) Desperate radical “minimalists,” as Professor Halpern terms them, are, he says, “fighting a rear-guard action,” and he does not hesitate to describe their reasoning as “nonsense.”

Professor Halpern’s comments echo those of A. F. Rainey, of Israel’s Tel Aviv University, whose recent review of the 1992 book In Search of Ancient Israel, by Philip R. Davies, is entitled “Uncritical Criticism.” Far from impressed with its logic and evidence, Professor Rainey sees the book rather as the product of a certain “fashion” in scholarship and describes it as emerging from an “unbridled imagination,” “nothing but idle fancy,”

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telling us in some ways more about Davies than about the ancient Near East. Analyzing one of Davies's major themes, Rainey pronounces it "nonsense," believable only to the "gullible," requiring "more blind credulity than the view that Davies seeks to refute." Rainey is hardly a fundamentalist; he acknowledges the existence of errors and tendentiousness in the biblical narratives. But he does not think much of the radically skeptical position on the Old Testament. Like Halpern, he links Davies with Thomas L. Thompson, "who," he remarks, "is well on the way to becoming the guru of the 'uncritical critics';" the works of both are "shot through with sophisticated conceits that," he declares, "have no basis." The problem is that there is little or no evidence for the radical skeptics' position, while a considerable amount of evidence argues against them. "It is not in the power of late twentieth-century skeptics to dismiss this testimony with a wave of a sarcastic hand." "Davies' book," he says simply, "deserves to be forgotten."

Both Baruch Halpern and A. F. Rainey suggest, contrary to the image that some innocent readers may entertain of the radical revisionists as representing the latest and best in rigorous, skeptical, evidence-not-dogma-driven scholarship, that the "minimalists" would profit greatly by better training in and more exposure to the discipline of ancient history. Professor Craig L. Blomberg makes a closely related point when he observes that "No responsible historian would ever approach the biographies of Alexander, Augustus, or Apollonius with the approaches of Crossan or [Jesus Seminar founder Robert W.] Funk. We should not treat Jesus this

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46 Ibid., 102; cf. p. 103.
48 Rainey, "Uncritical Criticism," 103.
49 Ibid.
Luke Johnson remarks that the claim of the Jesus Seminar to represent the cream of current thought on the New Testament rings rather hollow in view of the fact that "Most of the participants are in relatively undistinguished academic positions. Some are not in the strict sense in academic positions at all." Faced with analogously self-glorifying claims on the part of some revisionist writers on Mormonism, to the effect that they are real scholars while those involved with FARMS haven’t a clue about scholarly methodology, a few of us decided to do as Luke Johnson and others have now done. We looked at their credentials. Some considered this extremely rude, ad hominem, and even vicious. But we did not raise the issue in the first place, and we have responded to our critics much as Luke Johnson does: "These observations do not reflect on the seriousness or ability of the members [of the Jesus Seminar]. They are meant only to deflate the sometimes grandiose claims made by and for the Seminar as representing critical New Testament scholarship. It patently does no such thing." "These remarks," Professor Craig L. Blomberg has written, in the course of a similar observation about credentials,

are not meant to be taken in an ad hominem fashion, nor are they offered as a substitute for a detailed analysis and critique of the points they raise. Rather, they are meant as a response to the false but widespread perception that the ideas propagated by the Jesus Seminar represent the views of the majority of experts who are in a privileged position to know and disseminate the real facts to the public.

51 Blomberg, “Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?” 27.
Although Professor Johnson says that such mediagenic scholarship as that exemplified in the Jesus Seminar has little real value in itself, he feels that it does nonetheless serve a useful function. "The real significance of these highly public exhibits is that they have shown the wider world just how shaky some of the premises, and how shoddy some of the procedures, are in a great deal of biblical scholarship."\(^55\) And it is true that, as radical New Testament criticism has begun to emerge from academic obscurity into the often star-struck spotlight of the media, other observers have begun to notice what one acute reader independently terms "the dubious assumptions and shaky reasoning" that undergird radical New Testament scholarship.\(^56\) But this, too, is shocking! Can it really be the case that practitioners of biblical studies rely not merely on the evidence, but on presuppositions as well? Yes, it is. Certainly Harvard's Jon D. Levenson thinks so. "Though some of its practitioners like to present it as philosophically and theologically neutral," he notes, "historical criticism is not without assumptions of its own."\(^57\) (In certain extreme cases, one is compelled to remember C. S. Lewis's observation about reductionist debunkers of religious faith, the residents of his allegorical city of Zeitgeistheim: "They pretend that their researches lead to that doctrine: but in fact they assume that doctrine first and interpret

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\(^{55}\) Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 20-22.

\(^{56}\) Evans, "Can the New Jesus Save Us?" 8. Among useful and very recent books critical of such scholarship are Gregory A. Boyd, Cynic Sage or Son of God? Recovering the Real Jesus in an Age of Revisionist Replies (Wheaton, IL: Victor, 1995); Johnson, The Real Jesus; Wilkins and Moreland, eds., Jesus under Fire; Ben Witherington III, The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995). Stephen T. Davis, Risen Indeed: Making Sense of the Resurrection (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), is an intriguing philosophical defense of the resurrection of Christ which, among other things, critiques Van Harvey, a writer central to the argument advanced by Edward H. Ashment, "Historiography of the Canon," in Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 281-301. Professor Evans's own The Historical Christ and the Jesus of Faith: The Incarnational Narrative as History (a clever and significant title, for those who get it) is forthcoming from Oxford University Press.

their researches by it.") And the assumptions of "historical criticism" vary from scholar to scholar.

Some writers on the fringes of the Church, however, perhaps a bit behind the times, still seem to entertain the notion that preconceived ideas and ideology, though they drive the work of pseudoscholarly apologists, have no impact on Critical Scholarship. Such scholarship, they seem to feel, is almost as scientific and objective as chemical analysis. (A leading employee at Signature Books in Salt Lake City called in May of 1991 to inform me, among other things, that, while FARMS has a point of view that is lethal to its scholarly pretensions, Signature has no point of view at all. At Signature Books, he told me, people simply allow the facts to speak for themselves.) Of course, it is now commonly realized in more advanced circles that even the sciences and such seemingly bloodless disciplines as mathematical logic presuppose nonempirical, nonprovable, even ideological assumptions, so that it becomes difficult to see why some folks grow apoplectic at observations of the same thing in more sensitive and emotional areas like biblical or religious studies. (Will and Ariel Durant are supposed to have said that history is mostly guessing, and the rest is prejudice.) Nonetheless, it is often implied that radical skepticism in biblical scholarship represents nothing but the inexorable advance of value-neutral Truth. And if disconcerting conclusions have been reached, why, they have simply been forced upon Objective Critical Thinkers by the Facts, so that only a bunch of Neanderthals could possibly complain. "Scholars did not set out," declares one Latter-day Saint dissident, "to 'tear asunder' the biblical text, or to impose a particular critical viewpoint on the text. Instead, it was noted that the Bible is frequently in tension

59 See, for instance, the discussions by Phillip E. Johnson, Reason in the Balance: The Case against Naturalism in Science, Law and Education (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1995), and William Barrett, The Illusion of Technique: A Search for Meaning in a Technological Civilization (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1979), 3–117. George M. Marsden, The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), depicts, with prodigious learning, the process by which what Phillip Johnson terms "methodological naturalism" has become the absolute ruler of the American academic establishment.
with itself, and the critical scholar attempts to determine how this tension arose." He shows no awareness that the problems that are recognized, and the solutions that are proposed for these real or imagined problems, are not, and cannot in the nature of things be, free of "viewpoints" and the influence of general world views. He seems oblivious to "the power of assumptions, motives, and imagination to shape the way we make sense of the 'facts' that come to us from the past." In fact, it is on the basis of such presumably objective, critical New Testament scholarship that he rejects the claimed antiquity of the Book of Mormon: "The single greatest anachronism in my opinion is that the Jesus of the Book of Mormon is not the historical Jesus who lived and taught in Palestine [and who is revealed, not in the gospel accounts, but in the writings of certain late twentieth-century liberal biblical scholars], but the exalted, divinized Jesus as described by John the evangelist."62

There are, however, prominent authorities—not Latter-day Saints, and certainly not Mormon apologists—who point out that it is the purest fantasy to imagine that the world of contemporary biblical studies is divided, simpliciter, between purely objective, scientific biblical scholarship (embodied in the persons of the radical skeptics), on the one hand, and the opposing forces of subjectivist theological reaction and irrationality on the other. Thus, reviewing some of the more spectacular claims of recent Jesus scholarship, Professor Johnson concludes that "this, I need

60 Thompson, "Searching for the 'Historical Jesus,'" 59.
61 Mark D. Steinberg and Vladimir M. Khrustalëv, The Fall of the Romanovs: Political Dreams and Personal Struggles in a Time of Revolution (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 296, commenting on how assumptions affect the consideration of precisely what happened even in a relatively recent and quite well-documented historical occurrence. For a fine recent discussion of evidence and proof in general and as they relate to the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch, "The Power of Evidence in the Nurturing of Faith," in Nurturing Faith through the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1995), 149–86.
scarcely point out, is not critical history. It is the uncritical canonization of an ideological assumption.63

But, of course, it is the nature of ideology to be uncritically accepted. That is what distinguishes ideology from philosophy. As feminist scholars Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge have written,

ideology connotes that some of the ideas people hold are unarticulated and unacknowledged. Furthermore, in certain of its usages, ideology conveys the suspicion that the basic beliefs in question may be distorted and self-serving. Thus, one speaks of “analyzing” a philosophy of life but of “disclosing” or “unmasking” an ideology—the implication being that the person who subscribes to an ideology will be either reluctant to own up to it or unable to examine it critically.

The identification of someone’s allegiance to an ideology normally rests on indirect or circumstantial evidence. One looks for recurring patterns of behavior and characteristic locutions as well as explicit formulations...

People usually adopt ideological stances unknowingly and rarely subject them to systematic scrutiny.64

So Professor Johnson makes a serious charge when he contends that certain significant works of recent Jesus scholarship are ideologically driven rather than based on evidence. But he is quite deliberate in his contention. “The reasons” undergirding many of the positions taken in the new revisionist books, he says, “are more ideological than historiographical.”65 They emphatically do not flow from a simple, value-neutral contemplation of the unalloyed facts of history, for the presuppositions on which the system is based “are not properly historical observations. They are, rather, ideological commitments.”66 And, again, this is not only the situation in New Testament studies. Jon Levenson, sur-

63 Johnson, “The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus,” 25.
64 Daphne Patai and Noretta Koertge, Professing Feminism: Cautionary Tales from the Strange World of Women’s Studies (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 48–49.
65 Johnson, “The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus.” 23.
66 Ibid., 44.
veying similar trends in studies of the Old Testament, observes that
some interpreters of the Hebrew Bible “are actually asserting a
secular analogy to a religious revelation: they are claiming to have
a definitive insight, not empirically derived, into the meaning of
things. . . . The effect of such a claim, almost never acknowledged,
is . . . to set up a hierarchy. Only at the apex of this hierarchy
stand not power-hungry kings and self-interested bishops, but (to
borrow a term from Paul Mankowski) a ‘new clerisy’ of academic
theorists.”67

And if this is true in the relatively moderate mainstream of
biblical scholarship (as it must, necessarily, given the human con-
dition, be the case in all forms of human intellectual endeavor), it
is certainly so on the radical fringes of the discipline. And these
assumptions or presuppositions may not all be intellectual in char-
acter. They may, and no doubt often do, grow out of the particu-
lar life history and psychology of the scholar. In fact, Professor
Halpern concludes that, “at the extremes, the reaction against tra-
dition is emotional, not intellectual.”68 C. Stephen Evans, an
evangelical Protestant professor of philosophy, offers an astute
observation in this regard:

It hardly seems an accident that the conclusions of bib-
lical scholars who are fairly orthodox in their theology
tend to be historically conservative-to-moderate in
tone. (I have in mind here scholars such as Howard
Marshall, F. F. Bruce, Robert Stein, James D. G. Dunn,
N. T. Wright, and Catholics such as Raymond Brown
and John Meier.) Scholars who are less committed to
orthodoxy or positively opposed to historic Christian
faith, such as [Burton] Mack and [John Dominic]
Crossan, often produce portraits of Jesus that are quite
remote from church teachings. The latter type of
scholar often speaks disparagingly of the former,
implying that the more traditional scholar is less than
fully committed to “calling them as they see them”
and “letting the chips fall where they may.” From my
layperson’s perspective, it seems evident that the prior

68 Halpern, “Erasing History,” 34.
commitments of people like Mack may be pervasive in shaping the way they interpret the evidence.

That Mack does have an ideological axe to grind becomes evident in *The Lost Gospel*.69 He there explains that it is crucial to cultural progress to undermine the historical claims of traditional Christian faith: “The Christian gospel, focusing as it does on crucifixion as the guarantee for apocalyptic salvation, has somehow given its blessing to patterns of personal and political behavior that often have had disastrous consequences.” Christianity is at least partly responsible for such evils as colonial imperialism, the slave trade, and the Indian wars. It is only when we recognize that the founding Christian narrative is a mythical creation that we will be free to criticize it and perhaps to devise better, more socially progressive myths. There is much that could be said about Mack’s claims; my point here is that he should not pretend that he and other members of the Jesus Seminar approach the historical evidence with no ideological commitments.70

Jon Levenson, speaking from a background in Jewish studies, says much the same thing. He cites Peter Berger’s project of “relativizing the relativizers,” but remarks that, “in the context at hand, it would be more accurately termed ‘suspecting the hermeneutics of suspicion.’” By posing the question of the modern interpreters’ own place in reality as they sketch it, one challenges them to justify their claim, express or implicit, of independence from the dynamics they depict as ultimate.” In other words, if the thought of all other people is historically conditioned and psychologically constrained, one must ask the revisionists just how they have managed to transcend the human condition. “Might it be the case,” asks Professor Levenson,

that the interpretation of religion as only a mystification of power arrangements, for example, is itself an

70 Evans, “Can the New Jesus Save Us?” 7.
item in a discourse of power in which a new group, supported by new social arrangements, asserts its hegemony? If so—if, that is, there can be no transcendence over the social relationships in which we are embedded—then the assertion that the old order ought to bow to the new is groundless, for it presupposes the normativity that it also precludes.71

But back to the specifics of radical New Testament scholarship. "Working through this literature," reports Professor Johnson, "I have not been able to make up my mind whether its colloquial and casual discourse is a function of sloppiness or of cynicism," though he leans toward the idea that at least some of the ambiguity is "deliberate."72 Throughout it all, there is an "implicit—and sometimes explicit—theological agenda."73 (Again, diligent readers of the Review of Books on the Book of Mormon will recall discussions of what appears to be an analogous case of a hidden agenda—an agenda that is itself not dissimilar to that of the "minimalists.")74 "On the one hand," Professor Johnson says, "the authors claim to be doing 'critical scholarship,' without presupposition or bias, with the neutral assessment of sources, with the goal of simply discovering who Jesus 'really was.'" On the other hand, however, such radical scholarship has an unmistakably revisionist agenda.

Once more, the Jesus Seminar is an egregious example, claiming out of one side of its mouth that it is practicing the most sober and critical research, yet from the other side of its mouth (both sides represented mostly by Robert Funk, chief spokesperson) claiming at the very outset of the project that it intends to use the assured results of scholarship to save Christianity from its evangelical captors."75

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72 Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 22.
73 Ibid., 44.
75 Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 22–23.
(A number of dissident and hostile writers on Mormonism have made similar claims, that they—and they alone—do objective, value-neutral "critical scholarship." One critic, for instance, accuses a writer prominently associated with the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS)—who, I happen to know, does nothing even remotely of the kind—of advocating "an uncritical, dogma-driven exegesis.") 76 "The Seminar's disingenuous self-representation," writes Professor Hays, "stands in service of a larger agenda: the deliberate creation of a new gospel." 77

"A religion professor who has socialized with them," writes journalist Charlotte Allen, "informed me that a favorite after-hours activity for [certain] Jesus Seminar members is to belt out the rousing evangelical hymns of their church-going childhoods." 78 "Something other than disinterested historical research motivates these recent Jesus books," says Professor Johnson.

Present in all of them is a clear reformist goal, based on the conviction that traditional Christian belief is a distortion of the "real" Jesus. . . . These scholars want a new understanding of Jesus and Christian origins to have an impact on the cultural phenomenon called Christianity by removing what [Burton] Mack calls "the privilege of the Christian myth." 79

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77 Hays, "The Corrected Jesus," 47.
78 Allen, "Away with the Manger," 25. Mormon dissenters reportedly gather, in connection with certain symposia, for lusty songfests of the often mean-spirited hymn parodies in Paul Toscano and Calvin Grondahl, Music and the Broken Word: Songs for Alternate Voices (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1991). For selected specimens of these parodies, see Peterson, "Questions to Legal Answers," xxix–xxi.
79 Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 44.
(Compare the declaration of one writer associated with what might be termed the “minimalist” camp in Mormon studies: “I personally hope,” he writes, “that Book of Mormon scholarship can mold a purer faith and a nobler Mormonism. I believe that a spiritual trek is at hand for Mormonism and that the scholar’s word will be one of those guiding the church’s future.”) History, in other words, becomes a weapon for the resolution of current issues. As one observer has noted, “the Jesus Seminar has a polemical mission: combating Christian fundamentalists who still read the Bible literally” — though it would seem that some members of the Seminar are inclined to define “fundamentalist” and “literally” in a very broad fashion, one that would apply to just about anybody who resists their thorough-going disbelief. “In their hands,” says Professor Johnson of the radical revisionist writers, “what is called ‘history’ is really a camouflaged form of cultural critique of contemporary religious observance.” And this is not merely Professor Johnson’s opinion. For example, one of the Jesus Seminar’s own publications, The Parables of Jesus, having denounced Christian ministers of the traditional (i.e., wrong) type, announces that “the Jesus Seminar is a clarion call to enlightenment. It is for those who prefer facts to fancies, history to histrionics, science to superstition.” Professor Johnson expresses it in a rather different way: “The frenzied dismantling of the narratives of the New Testament . . . increasingly appears to be an attempt to avoid or replace the unmistakable image of Jesus limned in the pages of the New Testament.”

Writing about radical revisionist approaches to the Hebrew Bible, Baruch Halpern is reminded of a story that Sir Winston Churchill used to tell: An Englishman received a telegram from

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80 Mark D. Thomas, “Scholarship and the Book of Mormon,” in The Word of God, ed. Vogel, 76. The early Christian church, of course, undertook just such a trek in the first few centuries of our era. Latter-day Saints know it as “the Great Apostasy.”
81 Allen, “Away with the Manger,” 24.
82 Johnson, “The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus,” 44.
83 Funk, Scott, and Butts, The Parables of Jesus, xiii.
Brazil, informing him that his mother-in-law had died and asking him for instructions. The man responded instantly, “Embalm, cremate, bury at sea. Take no chances!” Such an attitude is, of course, amusing in a story. But it is rather unhelpful in real life, as in scholarship. Yet it can be found precisely there, says Professor Halpern. “At the base of the extremism of contemporary ‘minimalism,’ ” he writes, “lies a hysteria no less profound than that one. One may question the motives of the hysteria—they differ in different scholars. In one the motivation may be a hatred of the Catholic Church, in another of Christianity, in another of the Jews, in another of all religion, in another of authority.”

I raised the possibility of the existence of psychological and personality factors in scholarship on Mormon topics a couple of years ago. As certainly could have been predicted, my suggestion was not well received among the usual suspects. It is not quite polite to suggest that unbelief may not derive from purely rational sources, though I suspect that those same quarters would have few difficulties in admitting psychological influences on religious belief. Yet surely C. S. Lewis is right in pointing out that both belief and unbelief can be products of wish-fulfillment, and in encouraging us to guffaw heartily at the pretensions of those who would have us think that it is only religious faith that grows out of illogical personal desires and fears: “Then John stood still on the road to think. And first he gave a shake of his shoulders, and then he put his hands to his sides, and then began to laugh till he was almost shaken to pieces. And when he had nearly finished, the vastness and impudence and simplicity of the fraud which had been practised came over him all again, and he laughed harder.”

Luke T. Johnson, too, sees psychological factors at work in radical scholarship, conditioning and constraining the more purely intellectual arguments. In the Jesus Seminar, declares Professor Johnson, it is hard to miss “delusions of grandeur emitting a definitely paranoid aura.” And, indeed, anybody who has

85 Halpern, “Erasing History,” 47.
86 Ibid.
88 Lewis, The Pilgrim’s Regress, 72; see all of book four, chapter four.
89 Johnson, “The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus,” 23.
read "The Story of the Jesus Seminar," an extraordinary mix of glorying in persecution and sheer self-glorification, in the Seminar's 1988 book on The Parables of Jesus, will find it difficult to dispute Professor Johnson's verdict.90 "The fundamentalist mentality generated a climate of inquisition," reports the introduction to the Seminar's best-selling The Five Gospels, "that made honest scholarly judgments impossible."91 At the very time that The Five Gospels and Crossan's Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography were on the religious bestseller list issued by Publisher's Weekly, Charlotte Allen reports, "Funk and other seminar fellows boast[ed] with the intensity of early Christian martyrs about their persecution by the biblically literal-minded."92

As one specific instance of this, Professor Johnson notes that, "as the Jesus Seminar publicity would have it, scholars will lose their jobs under pressure from reactionary Christians."93 Indeed, the Seminar says that it has already occurred. "One fellow, whose name the seminar will not reveal, reportedly lost his teaching job at a church-affiliated college on account of his participation."94 The parallels to dissident claims about lack of intellectual freedom in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, and about the supposed ascendancy of fundamentalism and neo-orthodoxy in Mormon circles, are hard to miss. (They would also be wearisome to detail.) It has been bleakly amusing, for instance, to observe certain of the dissidents—in numerous radio and television interviews, in a host of newspaper and magazine articles—accuse the Church of "silencing" them. It is difficult not to think of such things when one reads about best-selling authors lamenting the "suppression" of their work. But then, I have to think along these lines: One recent attack on FARMS suggests that those who write for the Foundation, a number of whom are employed by Brigham

90 Funk, Scott, and Butts, The Parables of Jesus, ix–xv.
93 Johnson, "The Search for (the Wrong) Jesus," 20.
94 Allen, "Away with the Manger," 24. Recent newspaper accounts indicate that the star of Paul Verhoeven's film Showgirls has been effectively black-balled in Hollywood, and that Verhoeven, a fellow (as previously noted) of the Jesus Seminar, had warned her that such might be the consequences if she accepted the part. Progressive heroism is risky in high art, it seems, no less than in cutting-edge scholarship.
Young University, are motivated—nay, forced—to defend the Church by concerns about their careers.95

The deep emotions that accompany religious belief—and religious infidelity—could hardly have been expected to remain concealed in the face of such issues. And they have not. “This hysteria,” says Baruch Halpern, “inheres in the nature of biblical debates. There is a tremendous emotional investment on the part of many scholars in the biblical presentation, and an equal and opposite reaction against that investment on the part of many others. Biblical archaeology has a nasty reputation for ideological polarization.”96 (Note that Professor Halpern recognizes emotion on both sides of the argument, not merely on the believers’ side.) Robert Funk, the founder of the Jesus Seminar, for instance, calls John P. Meier, an eminent Catholic authority on the life of Christ and a critic of the Seminar, a “blockhead.”97 That, of course, is rather funny. But the invective is not always amusing.

The venom that has poured into print from the “minimalists” . . . and the traditionalists . . . is a matter of public record, [writes Professor Halpern]. Oxen have been gored all ‘round, and yet “minimalists” complain about abuse—as though they have not been delivering it with regularity, insinuating that the objects of their scorn, for example, are fundamentalists.98

96 Halpern, “Erasing History,” 47.
97 Allen, “Away with the Manger,” 26. Funk evidently likes this word; he has also applied it to Professor Glenn Early of the University of Santa Clara, who is a participant in the Jesus Seminar; see ibid., 30.
98 For analogous caricatures of mainstream Mormonism and faithful Mormon scholarship as “fundamentalist,” see, among many others, William D. Russell, “Beyond Literalism,” in The Word of God, ed. Vogel, 47–49; Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, “Joseph Smith’s Scriptural Cosmology,” in ibid., 188; Ashment, “Making the Scriptures ‘Indeed One in Our Hands,’” in ibid., 251; Thompson, “Searching for the ‘Historical Jesus,’” 61 n. 8 (where James E. Talmage is linked with Protestant fundamentalism); Thompson, “‘Critical’ Book of Mormon Scholarship,” 201. (Thompson, ibid., 200–201, 205–6, is typical, incidentally, of a number of dissenting writers on Mormonism who have denounced this Review for its tone while seemingly unaware of the vitriol and
Indeed, one member of the “minimalist” camp has even urged that [the prominent radical revisionist writer] Philip Davies adopt that peculiarly American form of intellectual vindication, the lawsuit.99

Does this remind anybody of anything? (Threats of legal intimidation are not without precedent in quasi-Mormon intellectual circles.)100

The essential point of all this, I suppose, one that ought to be entirely obvious, was summed up nicely by Jon Levenson: “Secularity,” he pointed out, “is no guarantee of religious neutrality.”101 Phillip Johnson, writing of assumptions in the sciences, and primarily in biology, sketches the situation well:

A methodological naturalist defines science as the search for the best naturalistic theories. A theory would not be naturalistic if it left something (such as the existence of genetic information or consciousness) to be explained by a supernatural cause. Hence all events in evolution (before the evolution of intelligence) are assumed to be attributable to unintelligent causes. The question is not whether life (genetic information) arose by some combination of chance and chemical laws, to pick one example, but merely how it did so.102

Thus the methodological naturalist rules out anything supernatural or divine by definition. But this is not only an approach in science, and its intrusions into scholarly thinking can be extremely mockery emerging from their own camp. Let me simply say, in passing, that, if we have occasionally been guilty of levity at the expense of some of our critics, this has been because they tempted us with irresistible targets. It isn’t our fault. Like most other Americans in the late twentieth century, we are victims. A few of us, indeed, may have been born that way, with the nastiness gene—which is triggered by arrant humbuggery.)

99 Halpern, “Erasing History,” 35, 47. “Why? Anson Rainey denied that Davies was an epigraphist, a specialist in inscriptions such as that on the Tel Dan stela” (ibid., 47).
100 Consider the amazing episode described in Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Questions to Legal Answers,” vii–lxxvi.
102 Johnson, Reason in the Balance, 208.
subtle. Consider, for example, the double standard that Craig Blomberg identifies in some skeptical responses to the New Testament:

It is often pointed out that there is little information about Jesus that can be gleaned from other non-Christian historical reports from the ancient world. Requiring such non-Christian corroboration, of course, immediately reintroduces the false dichotomy, for it implies that Christians cannot be trusted for the information they record about Jesus. As long as someone who saw or heard about Jesus’ ministry remains unconvinced by his claims, he or she is an objective reporter; but as soon as one becomes a disciple, nothing one says can be trusted!103

Still, if Professor Johnson had desired an illustration of the methodological naturalist’s approach to a nonscientific subject, and specifically to religious history, he could not possibly have improved upon the late Dale L. Morgan’s written remarks to Juanita Brooks. Morgan, a minor historian much revered among radical revisionist writers on Mormonism, set forth his conception of “objectivity” by defining it as

an objectivity on one side only of a philosophical Great Divide. With my [atheistic] point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, be they however so convincing. If God does not exist, how can Joseph Smith’s story have any possible validity? I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the Church.104

103 Blomberg, “Where Do We Start Studying Jesus?” 39 (emphasis in the original). On page 40, Professor Blomberg goes on to show that there is actually considerable evidence about Jesus in ancient non-Christian historians.

Bernard DeVoto, reviewing Fawn Brodie’s then-new biography of Joseph Smith in the *New York Herald Tribune*, recognized and praised the same essentially atheistic approach in her work: “She has written,” he said, “as a detached, modern intelligence, grounded in naturalism, rejecting the supernatural.” One recalls Sherlock Holmes’s somewhat impatient remark to Dr. Watson: “How often have I said to you that when you have eliminated the impossible, whatever remains, however improbable, must be the truth?” For some writers on Mormonism and other religious topics, the existence of God is simply, from the outset, “impossible.” Is it any surprise, therefore, since the action of God is ruled out in advance, that methodologies like those employed by Morgan and Brodie conclude that God did not act in Latter-day Saint history? Clearly, secularism is not religiously neutral. Secularists do not, somehow, by the sheer fact of their lack of religious commitment, emerge into a mythical world of pure, objective scholarship, beyond apologetics and polemics. Quite the contrary.

And “fundamentalism,” whatever that loose and frequently pejorative term may signify, may not exist only, or even particularly, among religious believers. There are, it is true, “fundamentalists who give historical criticism no quarter.” In the Christian context, they are typically to be found in the ranks of conservative Protestants. But there are also “historical critics who are fundamentalistic about their own methods.” (These are the sorts of people, for instance, who smugly imagine that those who disagree with them espouse a single, monolithic, reified, almost-Platonically-archetypal form of pseudoscholarship—an inferior, less-evolved strain of mental life, for which scientific nomenclature reserves the purely descriptive appellation “the apologetic historical methodology.”) Again, Professor Levenson expresses it well:

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105 His endorsement, including the quoted sentence, has appeared on the dust jacket of the book for decades.
If, as I said, the belief that the real meaning of religious phenomena is available only to the outside observer is a secular analogue to religious revelation, then a system of thought like historicism, which "exempts itself from its own verdict," is a secular equivalent to fundamentalism. For though it subjects all else to critique, it asserts axiomatically its own inviolability to critique. Demanding to be the norm by means of which truth and error are disclosed, this type of thinking, by definition, can never be in error.\textsuperscript{109}

One writer on Mormon and related topics fails to see that his faction, the radical revisionists, can be guilty of irrationalism and uncritical scholarship just as easily as those whom he criticizes. Indeed, having discerned the threat only on one side (his opponents'), he can see no middle ground between fundamentalism and radical skepticism. "Once one gives up the idea of an inerrant, strictly historical, biblical record," he says, "it must be admitted that there is little in the life of Jesus that can be known with certainty."\textsuperscript{110} But, again, as in the earlier case of Robert McKay, the absurdity of this claim becomes instantly apparent if we simply plug different terms into an argument of identical structure: "Once one gives up the idea of an inerrant, strictly historical [Roman chronicle/Ottoman archive/record of the War between the States], it must be admitted that there is little in the [history of Rome/of the Ottoman Empire/of the American Civil War] that can be known with certainty." Such claims, of course, would be laughed to scorn in secular historiographical circles. Yet to reject thoroughgoing and unjustified doubt in religious studies, we are told, is to be a fundamentalist. It is difficult, in the face of these groundless assertions, not to be reminded of Phillip Johnson's remark, in his recent critique of the reigning assumptions of methodological naturalism—assumptions that undergird much of the most radical scholarship in "Jesus studies" as well as,

\textit{Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology}, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 374 (emphasis mine). (The title of Ashment's article is, naturally, ironic.)

\textsuperscript{109}Levenson, "The Bible: Unexamined Commitments of Criticism," 29.
\textsuperscript{110}Thompson, "Searching for the 'Historical Jesus,'" 61.
I suspect, in the writings of those on the fringes of the Church who portray such scholarship as that of the irresistible mainstream: "Those who try to challenge naturalism," writes Johnson, "are confined not in a prison cell but in a stereotype."\textsuperscript{111}

Stereotypes notwithstanding, Latter-day Saints and other Christians are not obliged to accept the latest nostrums peddled by certain writers just because they are new, nor even because they are trendy and in fashion with some in the news media or have been ratified by the consensus of some scholarly group or other. Every argument and every specimen of scholarship must still be evaluated for evidence and coherence, just as it always has. And we must be ever alert for the smuggled-in premise, the polemical sleight-of-hand. The stakes are infinitely high. We shall surely find, if we abandon the gospel of Jesus Christ for some reductionist revision of it, that we have made the same trade as the biblical Esau.

"If you are going West, we must part here," said Mr. Enlightenment, drawing up. "Unless perhaps you would care to come home with me. You see that magnificent city?" John looked down by the by-road and saw in a flat plain without any trees a huge collection of corrugated iron huts, most of which seemed rather old and rusty.

"That," said Mr. Enlightenment, "is the city of Claptrap. You will hardly believe me when I say that I can remember it as a miserable village. When I first came here it had only forty inhabitants: it now boasts a population of twelve million, four hundred thousand, three hundred and sixty-one souls, who include, I may add, the majority of our most influential publicists and scientific popularizers. In this unprecedented development I am proud to say that I have borne no small part."\textsuperscript{112}

I said at the beginning of this lengthier-than-anticipated essay that I would be commenting on "a trio of loosely related topics."

\textsuperscript{111} Johnson, \textit{Reason in the Balance}, 199.
\textsuperscript{112} Lewis, \textit{The Pilgrim's Regress}, 37.
Some readers who have made it thus far may be wondering how the first two items are related in any way to the third. The answer is simply this: Agnostic or radically revisionist critics of the restored Gospel, and fundamentalist Protestant anti-Mormons, tend to converge, united despite their other differences by their disbelief in the founding narratives and sacred scriptures of the Restoration. This is nicely illustrated by the December 1995 issue of the Salt Lake City Messenger, published by the dedicated “career anti-Mormons” Jerald and Sandra Tanner. They offer a number of books for sale, of which nearly a third come from Signature Books, the premier radical revisionist publisher in (broadly speaking) Mormondom. (The Tanners are emerging as an important distributor of Signature volumes.) Among a list of conventionally anti-Mormon publications such as Mormons Answered Verse by Verse, Why We Left Mormonism, and How to Rescue Your Loved One from Mormonism, one finds also D. Michael Quinn’s The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power; Richard S. Van Wagoner, Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess; H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, Inventing Mormonism; Brent Lee Metcalfe, ed., New Approaches to the Book of Mormon; George D. Smith, ed., Faithful History; Richard Van Wagoner, Mormon Polygamy: A History; and Robert N. Hullinger, Joseph Smith’s Response to Skepticism. Indeed, as a special gift to devout consumers of Tanner-approved and -produced materials, the last is actually being given away “with every order of $25.00 or more.”113 (Perhaps, wonderful thought!, it has been remaindered.)

113 Salt Lake City Messenger 89 (December 1995): 1, 15–16; compare Salt Lake City Messenger 79 (August 1991): 16, and my discussion of the matter in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): xlv–xlvi. One could hardly ask, by the way, for a clearer demonstration of the Tanners’ opportunism and even cynicism: They distribute, as weapons against Mormonism, books whose underlying assumptions would also destroy their own cherished fundamentalist Protestantism. They just don’t mention this to their trusting (and largely fundamentalist) clientele. Intriguingly, by the way, the folks at Signature are now distributing Boyd Payne’s Utah Celebrities: A Guide to the Stars (1995) via the publishing name “Celestial Books.” Signature’s choice of a pseudonym (nom de guerre?) is fascinating. One would like to know if they selected it because they have not read Doctrine and Covenants 76:99–106 recently—or because they have.
Ed Decker and Bob McKay and Marian Bodine and Ron Rhodes and Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson scarcely have the firepower (or the intellectual candlepower), in and of themselves, to do much damage to the claims of the restored Church. In the alliance of convenience that is emerging between such conventional anti-Mormons and the far more articulate fringe critics within the Church, though, the attempt is being made (however illegitimately) to borrow the prestige of science and scholarship for the old anti-Mormon cause.114 Observers of the scene should be warned, however, that some revisionist writing has the same problems with logic, evidence, and bias that have been with us since the days of Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe. They are merely more subtle.

I am grateful to all those who helped in the preparation of this issue of the Review. Most of all, I thank the reviewers themselves, but I also wish to mention Alison Coutts, Shirley S. Ricks, and Melvin J. Thorne for their editorial assistance, and John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Stephen D. Ricks for useful comments.

Common abbreviations for Latter-day Saint works employed in the reviews include CHC for Comprehensive History of the Church, DHC for Documentary History of the Church, JD for Journal of Discourses, and TPJS for Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith.

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114 See, for instance, the recent use by Robert McKay and Utah Missions, Inc., of Stephen E. Thompson's dismissal of the antiquity of the book of Abraham in The Evangel (November/December 1995): 8. Thompson's unbelief, again, rests to a substantial degree on propositions that would, were not McKay using a double standard, subvert McKay's own religious position.
Editor's Picks

**** Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely.

*** Enthusiastically recommended.

** Warmly recommended.

* Recommended.

Arnold K. Garr. *Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1992. Professor Garr supplies a concise overview of the life of the great explorer, evaluating it from an avowedly Latter-day Saint perspective and using recently published materials by Columbus himself to demonstrate how closely the admiral’s self-understanding matches the portrayal of him in 1 Nephi. ***


Daniel Ludlow. *How to Get the Most from the Book of Mormon* (set of two tapes). Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987. The reviewer of this set of audio tapes felt that, although their three-hour listening time could more profitably be spent with the Book of Mormon itself, they might be useful to some people—especially to those without much prior experience with the Nephite scripture. *

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds. *The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction*. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995. Published by Brigham Young University’s Religious Studies Center, this is a rather uneven collection of papers presented at a symposium held at the university. *
Clair Poulson. *Samuel, Moroni's Young Warrior* and *Samuel, Gadianton's Foe* (sets of tapes). Salt Lake City: Covenant, 1993, 1994. Our reviewer, though she had some reservations, found this pair of Book of Mormon adventure novels for young adults “imaginative,” “fast-paced,” and “enjoyable.” *

George Reynolds. *Book of Mormon Dictionary.* Salt Lake City: Stemmons, 1988. A reprint of a work originally published in 1888, this dictionary is both useful in itself and valuable in reminding us of the contributions of one of the great early pioneers of serious Book of Mormon study. **

Eldin Ricks. *Eldin Ricks's Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works.* Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995. More portable than most computers, this is almost certainly the best printed concordance to the uniquely Latter-day Saint scriptures, and it won’t require you to fire up your microchips every time you want to locate a passage. ***

Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch, eds. *The Allegory of the Olive Tree: The Olive, the Bible, and Jacob 5.* Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1994. Some readers will no doubt notice a conflict of interest here: This volume is a FARMS publication, and I have a chapter in it. Having now made the requisite full disclosure, I continue to maintain that *The Allegory of the Olive Tree* is a very important book. ****
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.*

**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 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.

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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. Tvedtines, and John W. Welch.
Do the covenants in the Book of Mormon reflect modern theology?


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.

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


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: 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: 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.


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


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


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


**Is the Book of Mormon myth?**


**Question 2:**

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

Are the language claims of the Book of Mormon credible?

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


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: 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: 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: 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.


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: 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’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: 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: 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: 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: 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.


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.


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


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: 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: 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?


Can the text be analyzed objectively?


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


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: 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.


**Question 4:**

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

**Archaeology**


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: 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.


**Metallurgy**


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.


**Flora and Fauna**


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: 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.


**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.


**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: 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: B. H. Roberts believed there were no other people in America other than Lehites, 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: 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: 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.


Question 5:
Are the Book of Mormon Witnesses credible?

Are the Three and Eight Witnesses credible?

Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate, Jr., eds. The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction. Provo, UT: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1995. xviii + 374 pp., with subject and scripture index. $12.95.

Reviewed by Bryan J. Thomas

The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction is the ninth and last volume published from a series1 of symposia on the Book of Mormon sponsored and published by the Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center. The work features twenty-five papers focused on various topics arising from 4 Nephi through Moroni. More than half of the contributors are from either Brigham Young University’s College of Religious Education or the Church Education System.2

According to the editors’ introduction (pp. xviii), thirty-six papers were presented at the symposium, from which referees were


2 Thirteen of the authors are professors—assistant, associate, or emeritus—from the Ancient Scripture or Church History and Doctrine departments of the College of Religious Education at BYU. Two of the contributors are from the Church Education System and another two are from the religion department at Ricks College. One author is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Virginia. Four of the last seven authors are educators from other departments at BYU—Continuing Education, English, Statistics, and Organizational Behavior—and the remaining contributors are outside of academia from other professions.
to select twenty-five to be published based on given criteria. I am uncertain as to what exactly the objectives of the papers were, to whom they were targeted (many of the papers appear to be geared to a readership that is less informed about Book of Mormon text and scholarship; yet some of the papers, a minority, were prepared for a readership more acquainted with recent faithful Book of Mormon scholarship), and the respective criteria they were required to meet. Without this basic information, it is difficult to thoroughly and, perhaps, more accurately assess their value. However, standard criteria exist that a compilation of this kind should meet.

We must assume some basic standards for a volume that appears to be, at least from its cover, a quasi-commentary on the Book of Mormon. (1) The title itself, as well as the multivolume structure of the entire series, leads one to assume the material covered in the volume will follow the chronology of the Book of Mormon and give insight—historical, archaeological, doctrinal, spiritual, and behavioral—on at least a chapter-by-chapter basis. The introduction notes the editors’ desire to go “through the Book of Mormon in sections” (p. xii), and gives descriptions for each volume, such as “the fourth symposium covered Jacob through the Words of Mormon” (p. xiv). (2) The papers should be thorough in their analysis. As noted earlier, this volume has an impressive list of contributors who are highly educated, well read, and well published within the Latter-day Saint faith and general religious scholarship. Given that all the contributors are faithful members of the Church and committed to the “building up of the Kingdom,” combined with their intellectual accomplishments as instructors of the faith in a majority of their personal situations, it should be assumed that the reader will receive the full benefit of their knowledge—both intellectual and spiritual—and their experience on their respective topics. Great expectations are established. (3) The papers should bring new insight to and appreciation for the authenticity, antiquity, and spiritual power of the “New World” scriptures. (4) They should be motivating and

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3 The Prophet Joseph Smith, referring to contemporary discoveries about South American civilizations, commented, “We can not but think the Lord has a hand in bringing to pass his strange act, and proving the Book of Mormon true in the eyes of all the people. . . . Surely ‘facts are stubborn things.’ It will be
inspiring.4 (5) The contributors should provide fresh information, insight, and perspective that stimulates further light and knowledge,5 rather than predictable overworked notions that only reinforce the obvious. (6) Given the credentials of the participants, their contributions should be comprehensive and substantive—well researched and well documented—in nature. Since a majority of the contributors carry the title of professor in one manner or another—all have received various postgraduate degrees, and

as it ever has been, the world will prove Joseph Smith a true prophet by circumstantial evidence, in experiments, as they did Moses and Elijah.” TPJS, 267.

B. H. Roberts felt that over time the truths of the restored gospel—philosophical, doctrinal, and theological—would be established, proven, and presented in a scholarly way. “These doctrines contain the elements of a physical, moral, and spiritual philosophy that will be the accepted philosophy of the New Age now dawning upon our world; a philosophy that will supersede all other philosophies and remain steadfast in both the beliefs and affections of mankind. The elements, I say, are here in these doctrines; they await only some future Spencer to weave them into synthetic completeness, that shall be as beautiful as it will be true, to make that philosophy acceptable to the higher intellects of our age.” B. H. Roberts, Joseph Smith: The Prophet Teacher, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1927), 66–67.

4 See Doctrine and Covenants 88:118; 109:7; and 13th Article of Faith, DHC 4:541.

5 The concept of “line upon line,” “precept upon precept” (Isaiah 28:10) is the basis of continuing revelation, whether it be secular or spiritual. Orson Pratt’s admonition is clearly supportive of this position: “We should not get into the old sectarian notion, that we have no right to know anything about this, that or the other, and that we must not pry into this, that or the other. That is an old sectarian notion, which we have fought against all the day long, and we do not want it to creep into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It is the privilege of its members to let their minds expand, and to ponder upon the things of God, and to enquire of him, and by and by, when we have prepared ourselves by getting all the knowledge we possibly can from that which is written, God will give us more.” JD 16:336.

B. H. Roberts stated, “To be known, the truth must be stated, and the clearer and more complete the statement is, the better opportunity will the Holy Spirit have for testifying to the souls of men that the work is true. . . . [However.] I would not have it thought that the evidence and argument presented in [here] are unimportant, much less unnecessary. Secondary evidences in support of truth, like secondary causes in natural phenomena, may be of first-rate importance, and mighty factors in the achievement of God’s purposes.” B. H. Roberts, New Witnesses for God, 3 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1909), 2:viii, as cited in Reexploring the Book of Mormon, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), xiv.
many of them continue to research and publish their observations and conclusions, and certainly are evaluated on the merit of their contributions within academia—we must assume that they (a) have been educated in the rigorous and intellectual disciplines of solid scholarship; (b) are capable of applying that perspective to their topics; and (c) are motivated, if not compelled, to give their best thinking.6

The first clue that the reader is probably going to get less than the above criteria require is the total lack of preface or introduction (pp. xi–xviii) from the editors regarding the objectives, style, and impetus of the book.7 Although they provide a brief recap of the previous eight volumes (containing only the authors and the titles of their papers) and the symposia each represented, the editors assume the reader is well acquainted with the series and its agenda, and move quickly into the various papers.

The other disappointing aspect of the brief introduction is the lack of any explanation pertaining to the book’s “intentional” style of documentation. All nine volumes of the symposia show a very clear and deliberate approach to the documentation style, which can only be explained as either a format considered more effective for the reader to navigate or more efficient for the contributor to write to. The footnotes are scarce at best and, when used, perform only a perfunctory role as a light elaboration by the author or a reference to other sources, in general. Only eight of the contributors used footnotes. The greatest number of footnotes

6 Daniel C. Peterson’s comments regarding Signature Book’s representatives, authors, and supporters decrying a lack of scholarship and credentials among writers of faithful scholarship within the Latter-day Saint academic community are helpful in clarifying some issues pertaining to scholarly application. See Daniel C. Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction—Questions to Legal Answers,” Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 4 (1992): vii–lxvi, especially xxxi–xxxiii.

7 A statement of purpose was found in the preface to volume 1, but is absent from volume 9. It reads, “The purpose of the symposium represented by this volume was to show there is much more we can learn from and about that scripture in the pursuit of truth and understanding.” Cheesman, ed. and comp., The Book of Mormon: The Keystone Scripture, preface. It must be acknowledged that a hint of this same perspective was found in Nyman and Tate’s introduction: “The great lesson we have observed from these symposia is that there is much more in the Book of Mormon than can be gleaned from a casual reading” (p. xviii). This comment will be further addressed later in the review.
in any given article was eight. Bibliographical references ranged from none in two of the articles to thirty-two in one essay. One should not evaluate the scholarly effort of an author based solely on the number of footnotes or references found in his text. However, what is most bothersome in this volume, and apparently consistent with the frugal use of footnotes and references, is the lack of helpful substantiation in many of the articles. Much of the substantiation, which is entirely lacking in several of the papers, is quoted or referenced in the text itself, with the title of the reference and page number listed. A bibliography is then listed at the end of each paper for the complete reference. This style may be considered acceptable (the style used for the nine-volume series is the Modern Language Association [MLA] format, which accommodates a narrative style of text in which in-depth documentation can easily be avoided without extreme scrutiny being applied [my own interpretation of the style's weaknesses]), but it is difficult to follow and inconvenient for those who care to review the references; and, if these papers are any indication, it allows for a "loose" approach to substantiation. This style can more easily accommodate a narrative or lecture approach than a heavily documented, well-referenced paper by requiring little secondary substantiation beyond an initial quote or reference (again, my own bias). It would have been helpful if the editors had explained why this approach was chosen over a more suitable documentation style, enabling the reader to establish a more appropriate level of expectation.

However, setting an expectation, whether implied or spelled out, is the problem this volume, in common with its predecessors, struggles with most.\(^8\) Like the other volumes, the ninth volume

takes the reader on a roller coaster of scholarship and insight. As noted earlier, a high expectation was set with the title of the book, its contributors’ credentials, and the impressive track record of the publisher. Yet the reader comes away from many of the articles feeling disappointed and unsatisfied, receiving only the “headlines” of the deep substance and insight contained in the books of 4 Nephi, Mormon, Ether, and Moroni.

In many cases, the reference material is one dimensional, quoting only from within the Book of Mormon, or slightly broadening the scope to typical Church sources, with very little consideration of other material that would further substantiate and add depth, texture, and insight to the points being made. The obvious is stated and taken no further.

Millet’s article on the baptizing of little children, “Alive in Christ: The Salvation of Little Children” (pp. 1–17), provides solid insight into some of the theological implications of a doctrine that is contrary to free agency; the fall of Adam, which requires the atonement of Christ; and other eschatological aspects of the restored gospel (pp. 3–5). But where the article falls short is the absence of any detail or depth regarding the conceptual and practical origins of infant baptism, whether from the Old Testa-

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9 The inconsistent quality of the papers is reminiscent of a Mother Goose lyric, “There was a little girl who had a little curl / Right in the middle of her forehead; / When she was good, she was very, very good, / And when she was bad she was horrid.” The Real Mother Goose (Chicago: Rand McNally, 1983), 84.

10 The Religious Studies Center of BYU has, in the past, published outstanding literature in the form of the Monograph Series or the Specialized Monograph Series. In reviewing one of the volumes in the series, Noel B. Reynolds comments, “The Religious Studies Center, by virtue of its prestige and financial base, has the potential to provide the larger Latter-day Saint community with the highest quality of research and scholarship on our sacred texts.” Reynolds, review of The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, 185.
ment,\textsuperscript{11} New Testament, or Book of Mormon environments—new territory for LDS scholarship.\textsuperscript{12}

Millet quickly dismisses the historical complexity of the doctrine with a quotation on general apostasy from Elder James E. Talmage (p. 6) and jumps into a theological sermonette.\textsuperscript{13} He does not take advantage of the opportunity to address the doctrinal evolution of infant baptism, at least in post-Nicene times,\textsuperscript{14} and to give some insight and understanding to what

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{11} Millet points out, "A form of the heretical practice seems to predate the Christian era by many centuries" (p. 5), quotes from JST Genesis 17:3–7, and then comments in a footnote that this is an "interesting heresy," perhaps referring to the Apostle Paul’s reference in Hebrews 12:24. Millet is right; it is interesting and could have probably given us more insight on the origination of infant baptism. But then he drops the issue like a lead balloon.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{12} This issue seems to be a major component—important enough for Mormon to address it directly—of the Book of Mormon apostasy (and perhaps very relevant to early Christian apostasy) and an issue addressed head-on in the restoration scriptures. By that standard alone, it should merit further research and analysis.
  
  \item \textsuperscript{13} As an example in giving additional texture to the apostasy in the New Testament primitive church and a place to compare with what was occurring in the Book of Mormon environment, Geoffrey W. H. Lampe, \textit{The Seal of the Spirit: A Study in the Doctrine of Baptism and Confirmation in the New Testament and the Fathers} (London: Longmans Green, 1956), 98, explains the state of confusion at the departure of the Apostles: "The Church was left with second-class leaders at its head to face the critical period of consolidation with many urgent tasks to carry out in the development of its organization and the foundation of its doctrinal system." Many of the early Church’s “congregations consisted in the main of small groups of urban people of the lower middle-class. They were set in the confused religious milieu of the Gentile world, side by side with the guilds and their hero-cults, and the devotees of the numerous mysteries; in places they were in close contact with the fringe of Judaism, particularly in those quarters where a syncretistic amalgam of Judaism and 'pan-Orientalism' had developed" (ibid.).

  Infant “baptism gradually took [within the church] under the influence of the mystery cults (Hellenism), partly through the analogy with circumcision on the eighth day, partly through the teaching on inherited sin . . . and finally to the conception of the Church as the exclusive institution of salvation, into which one came through baptism and from which it was desired not to exclude the infants.” Hjalmar Evander, \textit{Det Kristna Dopet, dess Uppkomst och Betydelse: Några Sympunkter till Ledning för Diskussionen vid Prästmötet i Lund den 20, 21 och 22 September 1938} (Lund, 1938), 92.

  \item \textsuperscript{14} There seems to have been a natural progression or evolution of theological interpretation and priority, without the revelatory leadership of the apos-
perhaps had also occurred in the Book of Mormon. The possibility of ordinance/ritual corruption as a pattern of apostasy, and, along the way, providing substantiation of restored gospel ordinances, was ignored. But perhaps the largest hole in Millet’s paper is the absence of any analysis of the differing factors leading to infant baptism in the Book of Mormon versus the New Testament milieu. Unlike conditions during the apostasy in the


The actual ritual of baptism by immersion (Paul tends to make immersion quite clear in Romans 6:3–4, as confirmed by Beasley-Murray, *Baptism in the New Testament*, 133, and C. H. Dodd, *The Epistle of Paul to the Romans* [New York: Harper, 1932], 87), though practiced in the primitive church, was impractical for infant initiation as seen from the eyes of a leaderless church. Subsequently, it seems only a “small” leap to “commingle” other sacred washing and confirmation rituals familiar to the early Christians (Tertullian, in his treatise *de Baptismo*, about 200 C.E., refers to those who are both immersed and then washed in other “post-baptism” rituals. See Tertullian, *de Baptismo* 7–8, in *Corpus Christianorum*, vol. 1, p. 282. Also, Cyril of Jerusalem gives a very similar perspective as he details the various aspects of the sacred anointing ritual. See *The Works of Saint Cyril of Jerusalem*, trans. Leo P. McCauley and Anthony A. Stephenson, vol. 2 [Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1970], 168–70), where the original intent had become somewhat blurred. With the external and internal pressures of a multicultural church and the loss of any authoritative voice, the Church was left confused, knowing that the washing rituals—baptism, confirmation, and various anointings—were essential to salvation and, perhaps, by eventually transitioning to a less cumbersome washing ritual such as the anointing, a “simple compromise” was reached, seemingly ensuring that all the salvific “bases” were covered. The result, however, appears to be an emasculation of the atonement, dilution of ritual-based covenants, and subjugation to doctrinal apostasy. See also Leonel L. Mitchell, *Baptismal Anointing* (London: SPCK, 1966).

Enemies and critics of the Church have long implied that some of the doctrinal issues emanating from the Book of Mormon were only the result of environmental influences upon Joseph Smith at the time he introduced it. Note Alexander Campbell, *Delusions: An Analysis of the Book of Mormon* (Boston: Greene, 1832); Eber D. Howe, *Mormonism Unvailed, or a faithful account of that singular imposition and delusion, from its rise to the present time* (Painesville, OH: privately printed, 1834); Dan Vogel, *Religious Seekers and the Advent of Mormonism* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1988); Brent Lee Metcalf, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).
New Testament, prophetic and authoritative leadership was present in the Book of Mormon. No Hellenistic influence was present; however, perhaps other cross-cultural/pagan influences, not necessarily identified, were. The outcome of the Book of Mormon apostasy eventually led to a more dramatic conclusion—annihilation of a people. In other words, the Book of Mormon identifies more than one way for apostasy in doctrine, as well as in ordinance, to occur, with or without apostolic authority. Unfortunately, Millet’s paper only seemed to skim the surface of his subject matter.

In Robert J. Matthews’s paper, “The Mission of Jesus Christ—Ether 3 and 4” (pp. 19–29), a less-than-impressive analysis is given of the deep doctrinal issues of these Book of Mormon chapters. Matthews notes the historical questions regarding the absence of glass in 2200 B.C. and provides interesting support by quoting William S. Ellis from a report he made in *National Geographic Magazine* (p. 21). But Matthews seems to be unaware of Hugh Nibley’s earlier work on the same subject.17 Matthews comments on the ascension pattern of ancient prophets (pp. 20–21)—to gain revelation, to learn the process of entering the Father’s presence, and to establish their “calling and election”—giving it only passing attention by referring the reader to Joseph Fielding Smith’s work, *Doctrines of Salvation*.18 Matthews

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basically misses various elements of the temple motif found in the extraordinary experience of the brother of Jared; specifically, our understanding of what it means to enter God's presence. One comes away from Matthews's essay feeling unquenched, receiving little substance from what can only be considered a short Sunday School lesson rather than a scholarly approach to two revealing chapters in the Book of Mormon.

Patterns of covenant making and cycles of blessing/cursing are the theme in Lee L. Donaldson's essay, "The Plates of Ether and the Covenant of the Book of Mormon" (pp. 69-79). The article is quite thorough in many respects, weaving a comprehensive foundation of pattern in the Book of Mormon covenantal process. However, as Donaldson identifies the various criteria of the covenant and its implementation and implications in Jaredite civilization, he neglects recent scholarship on the subject. In his treatment of the inevitable destruction of an ancient covenant people, the reader is left to understand that it is simply the Lord's way of dealing with a "land-of-promise" people who do not keep...
their end of the covenant (pp. 75–76). Donaldson spends no time explaining how the eternal forces of the covenant law and the law of free agency come into conflict, placing the posterity of a fallen covenant people in heavy jeopardy before their “earthly probation” ever starts—the problem of the “traditions of their fathers.”22 Both E. Dale LeBaron’s “Ether and Mormon: Parallel Prophets of Warning and Witness” (pp. 153–65) and Michael W. Middleton’s “Gatherings in the Last Days: Saved in Sheaves, Burned in Bundles” (pp. 185–97) touch upon the same issues and likewise ignore, to a greater or lesser extent,23 the complex ramifications of a people, as well as their posterity, caught between the requirements of two eternal laws. The texture and depth that additional references and perspective could have brought to each of the articles would have helped demonstrate the Book of Mormon’s ancient authenticity,24 further reinforced covenantal

22 As noted in the Nephite and Jaredite situations, the true mercy that comes into play, in some situations when the covenant of the land is broken, must be the literal obliteration of the covenant people because of the condemnation or cursing placed on their heads, and likewise their posterity. The slate must be swept clean for future generations to have a “fighting chance.” Note the Father’s discussion with Enoch relative to many of these issues: “Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, and I gave unto them their knowledge, in the day I created them; and in the Garden of Eden, gave I unto man his agency; and unto thy brethren have I said, and also given commandment, that they should love one another, and that they should choose me, their Father; but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; And the fire of mine indignation is kindled against them; and in my hot displeasure will I send in the floods upon them, for my fierce anger is kindled against them; ... there has not been so great wickedness as among thy brethren. But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; ... these which thine eyes are upon shall perish in the floods; and behold, I will shut them up; a prison have I prepared for them” (Moses 7:32–38; see also Alma 9:23–24 and Moroni 8:29). In some situations, the Lord can be persuaded not to obliterate a civilization, e.g., Ninevah.

23 Middleton’s essay is the most thoughtful and well substantiated of the three. He does touch, although to a limited extent, upon the free agency element and accountability of the knowledgeable covenantor versus those unenlightened and uncovenanted (p. 189). His article is one of the few recommended in this review.

24 The annihilation of civilizations, as well as the entire world populace, is common to God’s approach to a completely wicked state (e.g., Noah’s time or Sodom and Gomorrah) in which freedom of choice is no longer viable. The
patterns, and underscored the power of both blessings and
cursings attached to a people’s covenant with God.

“‘The Knowledge Hid Up Because of Unbelief’” (pp. 31–44), by Kenneth W. Anderson, hints at intriguing subject matter. The objective of the article is to “identify the knowledge of God which is hid up from men and women because of unbelief and then to show the pattern of performance required for believers to find the great things laid up for them” (p. 31) through the brother of Jared’s experience with the Lord. From Moroni’s powerful statement regarding the “mighty” record of the Jaredites, Anderson intuitively assumes that these mysteries, which were hidden up until the bringing forth of the Book of Mormon, are a clear understanding of the character and nature of each member of the Godhead. However, he uses the brother of Jared as the receiver of that knowledge and foundation for Moroni’s statements, but is unable to garner any evidence for that claim.25

The brother of Jared witnessed the spiritual body of Christ and learned extensively who the Messiah was, and was shown “all things,” but no direct scriptural evidence is shown that he gained knowledge pertaining to the whole Godhead, specifically the Father and Holy Ghost.26 Anderson’s intent must be saluted, but

wicked are kept in a prison with the opportunity to repent (Moses 7:38–39). As an antithesis to this approach, one might note that the City of Enoch or Zion was taken out of the world so it could “dwell in safety forever.”

25 There is no disagreement that the brother of Jared must surely have known the nature and character of the Godhead. But that assumption is not borne out in Anderson’s evidence. Pertaining to the distinctions and character of the Godhead, Anderson quotes the Prophet Joseph Smith, Elder Bruce R. McConkie, the LDS Bible Dictionary, and the Doctrine of Covenants, but provides no evidence to demonstrate the brother of Jared’s clarity of understanding on the subject.

26 Anderson writes: “he [the brother of Jared] understood the character of the Godhead—God the Father, his Son, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Ghost” (p. 32); “The brother of Jared also knew the nature of the Holy Ghost” (p. 33); “The ‘Great Mystery’ of the Godhead was revealed and made known to the brother of Jared” (p. 36). Although one assumes this is correct, Anderson’s lack of qualification gives the reader the impression that it is in there somewhere. Unfortunately, the scriptural text lacks information on the Father and the Holy Ghost.
his use of the brother of Jared as the platform for a narrative on the implications of the first Article of Faith is forced and unsubstantiated.

Two articles that merit little attention are “The Jaredites—A Case Study in Following the Brethren” (pp. 45–59), by Douglas E. Brinley, and Frank F. Judd, Jr.’s “Jaredite Zion Societies: Hope for a Better World” (pp. 147–52). These are parochial chronologies that belong in a Book of Mormon primer, as opposed to a volume that hopes to reflect deeper observations. They show nothing more than one’s ability to list the basic events and characters of the book of Ether. Judd’s contribution could have been more suitably subtitled, “Hope for a Better Article.”

27 Anderson tries to use the brother of Jared’s encounter with God as a means to bring in further enlightenment on the Godhead through modern revelation. However, he completely moves away from the experiences of the brother of Jared, assuming the reader must know where the book of Ether elaborates on such matters. Anderson then immediately changes gears to jump into commentary on modern revelation without ever showing the reader the “linkage” between the two subject matters.

28 Anderson could better have tackled the issues of the Father motif centered around the Son rather than providing a narrative on the Godhead that has tenuous links to the brother of Jared experience. Millet’s essay on this issue in Doctrinal Commentary on the Book of Mormon, Vol. 2—Jacob through Mosiah, ed. Joseph Fielding McConkie and Robert L. Millet (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 226–30, begins to open the door on various issues related to the Book of Mormon’s focus on this aspect of Christ’s mantle. Other outside sources that could be helpful on this subject include: Margaret Barker, The Great Angel: A Study of Israel’s Second God (Louisville, KY: Westminster, 1992); Jarl E. Fossum, The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord: Samaritan and Jewish Concepts of Intermediation and the Origin of Gnosticism (Tübingen: Mohr, 1985); and Mark S. Smith, The Early History of God: Yahweh and the Other Deities in Ancient Israel (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1990).

29 The editors, Nyman and Tate, say in their introduction, “The great lesson we have observed from these symposia is that there is much more in the Book of Mormon than can be gleaned from a casual reading” (pp. xviii). Judd and Brinley surely must have been aware of this sentiment, which makes one wonder why their papers were even allowed into the volume.

30 The articles are basically narratives that provide no further investigation beyond the obvious, no correlation with other cultures, e.g., Mesoamerican history or morals, and no biblical or extrabiblical commentary expansion.
One of the editors, Monte S. Nyman, provides an interesting article regarding "apostolic judgment" in reference to the final judging of the twelve tribes of Israel. The essay, "The Judgment Seat of Christ" (pp. 199–213), touches on several interesting aspects of the final judgment, and a few that are unique to Mormon thought. It notes that the "Jerusalem Twelve" will judge Israel because of their firsthand witness of the Savior's ministry, as well as each member possibly originating from one of the tribes of Israel (pp. 201–2). Nyman relies on his ability to persuade the reader of this logic (which is probably correct) without providing any direct substantive references pertaining to the thesis.31 Nyman raises an interesting concept that the four Book of Mormon abridgers—Nephi, Jacob, Mormon, and Moroni—could be the four angels of judgment noted in the book of Revelation 7:1 because of their respective valedictions mentioning joining us at the judgment bar (pp. 206–8).32 Nyman must get points for bringing some insightful concepts to the table, but he does himself, as well as the reader, a great disservice by not further substantiating and expanding his interesting thesis through the multitude of available sources.33 Still, Nyman at least cracks the door open on subject matter that must be further researched.

31 Nyman does not provide one reference (whether modern revelation, scholarly, or other) outside of the scriptures regarding any of his assertions. In many cases, the scriptures, as helpful and forthright as they are, do not necessarily directly or indirectly support his perspective.
32 Nyman builds a case for this thesis by: (1) noting all four abridgers declare, directly or indirectly, that they will meet us (readers of the Book of Mormon) at the judgment bar; (2) interpreting an explanation of Revelation 7:1 in Doctrine and Covenants 77:8, as messengers who will have power to save and condemn, to fit well with the record recorded by the four abridgers; and (3) explaining that the messengers with the "everlasting gospel" in Revelation 7:1 are consistent with descriptions of Moroni as the angel with the everlasting gospel in Revelation 14:6 and could easily be transferred to the other Book of Mormon representatives.
In his essay, "The ‘Author’ and the ‘Finisher’ of the Book of Mormon" (pp. 61–68), John M. Butler provides some insightful correlations between Mormon and Joseph Smith in their roles as prophets of God, particularly their respective contributions in bringing forth the Book of Mormon to this dispensation. The author gives the reader interesting tidbits to chew on regarding the two prophets’ early age of prophetic initiation (pp. 62–63), predecessors prophesying of their work (p. 62), their instruction by other ancient prophets (p. 63), their same age—24 years—of beginning their work of recording or translating the Book of Mormon (p. 64), similar adversarial challenges they both faced (pp. 64–66), and their calling and election being made sure while they were yet in the flesh (p. 66). Although somewhat brief, the essay is interesting and gives the reader greater understanding of the roles of prophets. The only mild glitch in the article is on page 62, where Mormon is mistakenly replaced with Moroni as the “author” pertaining to the “Mormon-Joseph/author-finisher” comparison.

Three of the essays—"Light in Our Vessels: Faith, Hope, and Charity" (pp. 81–93), by H. Dean Garrett; "There Was No Contention" (pp. 167–83), by Byron R. Merrill; "Unity through the Power of Charity" (pp. 263–75), by Alvin C. Rencher—feature various aspects of the "Faith, Hope, and Charity" (Mormon 7) thematic. It was interesting that none of the papers mentioned the source issues concerning this text, starting with the Apostle Paul’s believed origination of the formula. 34 One might assume that, since they avoided noting the “Pauline formula,” they were not obligated to address the issues surrounding it in the Book of Mormon. 35 However, Hugh Nibley notes that “a number of
scholars have independently shown the really ancient background—traced by some even to Babylonian times—of the well-known Pauline formula.”36 Others have felt that Christ may have brought the “ancient formula” with him when he visited the Book of Mormon people.37 Interpretation and application of the faith, hope, and charity formula is important, but further research38 on its origins could be insightful toward understanding the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, the sayings of Christ outside the biblical canonized gospels and 3 Nephi, and the contents of the brass plates.

Of the three essays, Merrill’s and Rencher’s are the more insightful and comprehensive. Merrill begins his article by noting a 4 Nephi descriptor of Zion, “There was no contention,” and uses it as a jumping-off point to build “a pattern for reestablishing Zion, which encompasses both a warning of what must be avoided and a promise of what can, with the Lord’s help, be achieved” (p. 167). Merrill then proceeds to establish a strong foundation by scripturally analyzing the elements of contention, anger, faith, hope, and charity. However, if there can be one criticism given to Merrill’s work, it is the absence of any reference to John 17, known as the “Priestly Prayer,”39 which establishes

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36 Hugh Nibley, Since Cumorah, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 112. Also, see ibid., 455–56 n. 4: “Also considered an anachronism in the Book of Mormon is the reference to faith, hope, and charity, a formula on which the new Coptic texts cast some light, and which was known to be not a Pauline invention but a well-known expression in very ancient times. . . . Henri-Charles Puech and Gilles Quispel, ‘Les écrits gnostiques du Codex Jung,’ Vigiliae Christianae 8 (1954): 13–14.”

37 See Richard Lloyd Anderson, Understanding Paul (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 118–19; Sidney B. Sperry, Paul’s Life and Letters (Salt Lake City, Bookcraft, 1968), 134.

38 Currently no exhaustive work is available on this subject. Any original work on the origin of the Pauline formula would likely require much more effort and research than what appears to have been invested in a majority of this volume’s essays.

the "oneness" motif found in the Zion concept featured by Merrill. Rencher, on the other hand, does bring this element into his essay (p. 266), noting first Christ's version of it in 3 Nephi 19. The quintessential element of again entering the Father's presence is to be one with him. This is where the heart, the mind, and the actions are consistent with God's. Each one of the three articles by Garrett, Merrill, and Rencher gives sound interpretation of the Pauline formula in conjunction with the Zionistic approach to selflessness and unity; however, would any of the articles be considered breakthrough, original contributions?—probably not.

Related to the Zionistic approach, Jeff O'Driscoll's article, "Zion, Zion, Zion: Keys to Understanding Ether 13" (pp. 215–34), is one of the few standouts in the volume. O'Driscoll conducts a thorough analysis of Zion, carefully leading the reader verse by verse in Ether 13 and then translating the issues to the restoration and the Second Coming. He emphasizes that three things should be gained from Ether 13: (1) Zion is a "significant theme" of the past, present, and future; (2) Jackson County will be the place of "Zion, the New Jerusalem;" and (3) the "preservation of Zion has necessitated its being removed from the earth in the past and will require it in the future." O'Driscoll notes that beyond there having been three holy cities in three dispensations there will "perhaps . . . be a fourth city in yet another time" (p. 229). This article was a delight to read, establishing a substantive path to its conclusion.

Another highlight was Bruce K. Satterfield's essay, "Moroni 9–10: Remember How Merciful the Lord Hath Been" (pp. 277–88). His elaboration on the importance of seeking spiritual gifts.

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41 It is interesting to note that O'Driscoll had more than twenty helpful references in his bibliography (pp. 233–34), substantially more than a majority of the essays found in this volume. This is not necessarily to imply quality over quantity, but it is interesting to note that the author was more successful in convincing the reader of his thesis than the authors of many of the other articles with less substantiation.
was compelling. Similar to O'Driscoll's approach, Satterfield carefully breaks down the two Moroni chapters, completing the direction and focus Moroni was probably seeking for those who read his words.

Two other papers that hit home runs are "Zion Gained and Lost: Fourth Nephi as the Quintessential Model" (pp. 289-302), by Andrew C. Skinner, and "Jared and His Brother" (pp. 303-22), by Thomas R. Valletta. In focusing on the Zion concept in 4 Nephi, Skinner brings to light the desire of various societies, religious sects, or groups to "imitate" Zion (p. 294). He specifically uses the Qumran community as an example. He provides insight into the Law of Consecration (p. 295), establishing it as a precursor to a Zion society. Although Skinner's work might not be considered original, it does bring certain aspects of a Zion condition, as well as its apostasy, into a new light.

Valletta's contribution is probably the best in the book. He insightfully explores patterns or types established by the Jaredites and relates them to the "Eternal Plan of Redemption" (pp. 304-5), everything eventually pointing to Christ. From types such as the exodus of the Jaredites to the brother of Jared himself, Valletta breaks new ground by establishing clearly ancient elements to the Jaredite record. He supports his thesis with strong documentation, with certainly the most extensive and helpful reference list of any of the contributors in the volume. Valletta compares the Jaredite language of being "driven" from their initial inheritance only to be promised a greater inheritance with other similar expulsions.

42 Satterfield quotes Elder Oaks: "We should seek after spiritual gifts. They can lead us to God. They can shield us from the power of the adversary. They can compensate for our inadequacies and repair our imperfections" (p. 282). Satterfield goes on to further elaborate through President George Q. Cannon: "How many of you are seeking for these gifts that God has promised to bestow? How many of you, when you bow before your Heavenly Father in your family circle or in your secret places, contend for these gifts to be bestowed upon you? How many of you ask the Father in the name of Jesus to manifest Himself to you through these gifts? Or do you go along day by day like a door turning on its hinges, without having any feeling upon the subject, without exercising any faith whatever, content to be baptized and be members of the Church and to rest there, thinking that your salvation is secure because you have done this?" Gospel Truth: Discourses and Writings of President George Q. Cannon, ed. Jerrald L. Newquist, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1974), 195-96.
e.g., Adam and Eve, Cain, and Israel (p. 309). The paper inspires and motivates the reader to see other types and patterns in the Jaredite record, such as the death and rebirth of the Jaredites crossing the sea,\(^{43}\) drawing parallels to the baptismal covenant and its symbolism (p. 312). The wanderings of the Jaredites and other wandering or journey motifs focus on an “eternal return” theme,\(^{44}\) which Valletta identifies and enlarges upon. Valletta covers the “ascension” ground that Matthews’s article sidesteps, bringing a richer appreciation of what is available to those who seek “the face of God.”\(^{45}\) This article provides “meat” for the reader and allows him or her to dig deeper into the substantive issues of the Jaredite story. It provides evidence, counter to many of the volume’s articles, that more can be found beyond the obvious in the Book of Mormon.

The book’s final article, “The Socio-Economics of Zion” (pp. 337–52), written by Warner P. Woodworth, gives a strong finish to a volume mainly comprised of lightweight essays. He starts his thesis by establishing key “aspects of how God’s people ‘lived after the manner of happiness’” (p. 337) and by noting that cataclysmic events had to occur as a “fundamental cleansing,


\(^{44}\) It reminds the reader of the “The Pearl” hymn in early Christianity, in which the son leaves the royal house of his father and mother to find the pearl. While on his journey, which, over time, makes him forget his noble heritage, he becomes lost to the world he dwells in. His royal parents and elder brother become concerned and send him a letter reminding him of his heritage. He awakes and takes the pearl, returning home clothed in glory to reclaim his inheritance; see G. Bornkamm, “The Acts of Thomas,” in New Testament Apocrypha, ed. Edgar Hennecke and Wilhelm Schneemelcher (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 2:433–37; Nibley, The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri, 267–72. Other sources referring to the wandering or journey motif include: Mircea Eliade, Myth and Reality (New York: Harper & Row, 1963), 81; and, as Valletta recommends in his essay for a general review, see Mircea Eliade, The Myth of the Eternal Return (New York: Pantheon Books, 1954).

\(^{45}\) Valletta quotes Joseph Smith: “The least Saint may know all things as fast as he is able to bear them, for the day must come when no man need say to his neighbor, Know ye the Lord; for all shall know Him (who remain) from the least to the greatest. How is this to be done? It is to be done by this sealing power, and the other Comforter spoken of, which will be manifest by revelation” (p. 317). TPJS, 49.
empowering people to function on a higher plane, that of Zion" (p. 340). Woodworth writes intelligently, showing how man by nature experiences conflict between selfish, self-gratifying behavior and loftier perspectives of caring and selflessness (p. 341), and that only through spiritual conversion can he have "all things in common" to live in a utopian society. Woodworth covers solid ground—including humility, economic commonality, spiritual and priesthood power, and a strong work ethic—in distinguishing this utopian environment, as well as what began to occur economically—a diversity of wealth, socioeconomic classes—in its destruction (pp. 340–48). This article is articulate and well researched.

As noted at the beginning of this review, high expectations were established for this book. In some cases they were met, but in many cases they were not. In an environment where the motto "the glory of God is intelligence" echoes through its halls, one must wonder why more effort, research, thought, and insight were not put into these essays as a whole. In reviewing the third volume in this series, Noel Reynolds observed the same condition.

Only half of the papers convince the reader that the authors have mastered the relevant literature on their various topics. One gets the impression that the editors and some of the authors do not place much value on the growing scholarly literature on these scriptural texts. Rather, one frequently notes terminology and assumptions that are unexplained and that seem to depend on an unarticulated oral tradition for both sense and import. Further, one might also wish that the editors would vigorously recruit in wider circles, soliciting the best papers possible on each topic, and truly fulfill the mission of a Brigham Young University Religious Studies Center. 46

Orson Pratt believed that when we are seeking spiritual, intellectual, or other confirmation we have the "right and privilege to knock, and we have the promise that it shall be opened to us; to seek, and when we do seek, to do so with the expectation

46 See Reynolds, review of The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, 186.
of finding."\(^{47}\) Very little knocking or seeking occurred in many of these papers. The \textit{modus operandi} most preferred is best described as "well-oiled methods of scriptural elucidation established over many years."\(^{48}\) While a few bright spots are present among the contributions, I must echo a review of an earlier volume in saying, "there is more that reflects the view from a cloister, lacking a footing in either the world of the Book of Mormon or our own. It is not enough to let scriptural texts and statements by General Authorities converse among themselves in our essays. The expectations and needs of believers and seekers deserve a scholarship aware of the nature of humankind in whatever period."\(^{49}\)

The credentials and merits of this volume's contributors are impressive, yet their product contained in the book is not. It has the potential of reinforcing the stereotypes touted by detractors of Mormon scholarship of being biased in perspective, unresearched, and self-indulgent.\(^{50}\) Sadly, if this book is any indication, a tendency still exists toward what Hugh Nibley described as

zeal without knowledge. . . . One has only to consider the present outpouring of "inspirational" books in the Church which bring little new in the way of knowledge: truisms, and platitudes, kitsch, and clichés have become our everyday diet. The Prophet [Joseph Smith] would never settle for that. "I advise you to go on to perfection and search deeper and deeper into the mysteries of Godliness. . . . It has always been my province to dig up hidden mysteries, new things, for my hearers."\(^{51}\)

\(^{47}\) Orson Pratt, \textit{JD} 17:327.
\(^{48}\) See Hauglid, review of \textit{The Book of Mormon: Alma}, 198.
\(^{49}\) See Johnson, review of \textit{The Book of Mormon: Mosiah}, 162–63.
Elder Neal A. Maxwell notes "there is so much more in the Book of Mormon than we have yet discovered."\(^{52}\) The volume's editors agree "that there is much more in the Book of Mormon than can be gleaned from a casual reading" (p. xviii); yet, the effort to "glean" beyond the obvious rarely occurred in many of the contributions. Holding back one's contribution, even within the field of scholarship, warns Elder Maxwell, is counter to the consecration of one's skills and commitment to "building up the Kingdom."\(^{53}\)

Scholars might hold back differently than would a businessman or a politician. A few hold back a portion of themselves merely to please a particular gallery of peers. Another might hold back a spiritual insight from which many could profit, simply wishing to have his or her "ownership" established. Some hold back by not appearing overly committed to the Kingdom, lest they incur the disapproval of particular peers who might disdain such consecration. In various ways, some give of themselves, even extensively, but not fully and unreservedly.\(^{54}\)

If lack of effort is not the issue, then lack of recognition or acceptance of the large body of available scholarly literature is. This gives one the impression that a philosophy of "simplicity"\(^{55}\)—where substantiation is considered unnecessary and burdensome—is "a brew." The danger of this kind of approach is that it breeds a pragmatism and orthodoxy that blinds itself to further light and knowledge, as evidenced in evangelical Christian

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54 Ibid, 8.
55 Lately, this approach has been referred to as "traditional" Mormon scholarship; see Rand H. Johnson's review of *The Book of Mormon: Mosiah*, 160–63. "Traditional Latter-day Saint scripture scholarship is easily identifiable and, in most instances, interesting and sometimes even intellectually stimulating; however, rarely does it have a newness or originality that inspires one to a higher level of commitment and dedication which makes a real 'difference' in one's life"; Hauglid, review of *The Book of Mormon: Alma*, 199.
fundamentalism's smug rejection of most biblical scholarship.\textsuperscript{56}
Can this "anti-learned" sentiment be also applicable to one's faithful approach of the Book of Mormon? "God forbid!"\textsuperscript{57}

Warning against such a narrow approach, Brigham Young proclaimed that "all truth is for the salvation of the children of men—for their benefit and learning—for their furtherance in the principles of divine knowledge; and divine knowledge is any matter of fact—truth; and all truth pertains to divinity."\textsuperscript{58}

Lest we forget, original thinking and asking the unaskable questions are what began the restoration process. Nibley reminds us of Joseph's concerns when introducing new doctrine, new perspectives, in probing beyond the obvious.

"[If I] go into an investigation into anything, that is not contained in the Bible . . . I think there are so many over-wise men here, that they would cry treason and put me to death." But, he asks, "why be so certain that you comprehend the things of God, when all things with you are so uncertain?" True knowledge never shuts the door on more knowledge, but zeal often does.\textsuperscript{59}

\textit{The Book of Mormon: Fourth Nephi through Moroni, From Zion to Destruction} provides some insights, but the real treasures of these last books in the Book of Mormon are yet to be found, or, at least, they are found elsewhere. This book or the entire series should not be considered a commentary on the deeper things of the Book of Mormon. "It must not be forgotten that the Church still awaits an in-depth, scholarly but faithful commentary on the Book of Mormon."\textsuperscript{60} This volume is cautiously recommended.

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\textsuperscript{57} The Apostle Paul's reaction to ludicrous assumptions of God's judgment (Romans 3:6).
\textsuperscript{58} Brigham Young, \textit{JD} 7:284.
\textsuperscript{59} Nibley, \textit{Nibley on the Timely and the Timeless}, 268. For the Joseph Smith quotations, see TPJS, 348, 320, respectively.
\textsuperscript{60} See Stirling, review of \textit{The Book of Mormon: Helaman through 3 Nephi} 8, 218.
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but disappointment should not come as a surprise if the reader is hoping for something more than the written form of a subjective oratory. Is it worth buying? Perhaps, but only at a value equal to the effort applied to many of the papers: a discounted price.

Reviewed by Bruce A. Van Orden

Every City, Hill, River, Valley, and Person

George Reynolds is fondly remembered for his pioneering studies and publications on the Book of Mormon. Not only did Reynolds compile the classic *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*, he also published 109 articles on Book of Mormon topics, 55 of these appearing in the biweekly magazine for the Deseret Sunday School Union, the *Juvenile Instructor*. These articles provided the grist for two other noteworthy books: *The Story of the Book of Mormon* and *A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*. The second of these was published anew as *Book of Mormon Dictionary* in 1988 by Stemmons Publishing Company of Salt Lake City. The 1988 publication is 8 1/2 x 11 inches and punched with three holes in order to fit into a gospel student’s binder. My purpose in this review is to assess George Reynolds’s

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contributions to Book of Mormon scholarship, particularly through his *Book of Mormon Dictionary*. And since the seven-volume work, *Commentary on the Book of Mormon*, allegedly coauthored by George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl, is still on the market, I will also comment on those volumes.

George Reynolds was not just a Book of Mormon scholar, of course. He served as a secretary to the First Presidency from shortly after his arrival in Utah as a British immigrant in 1865 until his death in 1909. In 1890 he was called to the First Council of Seventy, or as one of the first seven presidents of the Seventy, as the calling was commonly designated then. He was twice a missionary in England, an emigration agent in the European Mission, an assistant editor for the *Deseret News* and the *Juvenile Instructor*, a member of the board of directors for numerous Church businesses, a Salt Lake City councilman, a college lecturer, and a general administrator in the Deseret Sunday School Union. He is most remembered as the "test case" in which he was the first Mormon tried and convicted for polygamy and the first to go to prison for this "crime." *Reynolds v. the United States* (1879) is considered a landmark Supreme Court decision.

While in the Utah Territorial Penitentiary from 1879 to 1881 George began his awesome contribution to Book of Mormon commentary. He was thrilled with the new 1879 edition of the Book of Mormon—arranged into chapters and verses by Elder Orson Pratt. Since he had virtually nothing else to do, Reynolds decided to use his time in intensive study of all the scriptures. After a few weeks the idea hit him that he could provide some explanation of Book of Mormon life and times to young readers, even as he had done many times with Bible stories over the previous several years. So he started sending his copy to the *Juvenile Instructor* office for publication every two weeks. The articles sported such titles as "The Laws of the Nephites," "Personal Appearance of the Nephites," "The Art of War among the Nephites," "Nephite Proper Names," "Agriculture among the Nephites," and "The Lands of the Nephites." The last, a series of five articles, was the first serious attempt by a Mormon author to identify Book of Mormon sites with western hemispheric cities, mountains, rivers, isthmuses, and continents. Thus the tantalizing
study of Book of Mormon geography (shall we also admit “debate”?) was born into the Latter-day Saint Church.

During the summer of 1880, after writing approximately eighty articles in prison for the *Juvenile Instructor*, most of them about the Book of Mormon, George became deeply depressed over the monotony of prison life. He stopped writing for a month. Then a brainstorm hit him: Church members could use a concordance to the Book of Mormon similar to Alexander Cruden’s *Complete Concordance to the Old and New Testaments*. With renewed vigor, Reynolds plunged back into his work, transcribing passages from the Book of Mormon at the rate of as many as 350 per day. By the time of his release in January 1881, George had completed 25,000 entries in his concordance. But his monumental work, delayed again and again by hosts of other duties, would not be published for another twenty years.

After Reynolds was again a free man, his friends urged him to organize his writings on the Book of Mormon into a single volume. George, a thoroughly modest man, resisted this for a few years, but when the federal Anti-Polygamy Crusade hit full stride in 1885 and he had a little extra time when the First Presidency was on the “Underground,” he decided to put together his *Story of the Book of Mormon*. This volume was a graphic portrayal of the narrative story line in the scripture along with his analyses of Book of Mormon lifestyles, names, geography, and ethnology that he had produced in jail. These sociological studies are remarkable for their detail and clarity. Reynolds was the first Latter-day Saint scholar to undertake such thorough commentary on the Book of Mormon text. All along he pecked away at his concordance project and often with the aid of his older children.

In *Story of the Book of Mormon*, George investigated a host of names—actually, all the proper names that appear in the Book of Mormon. He provided detailed descriptions of every city, valley, hill, land, and river mentioned in the Book of Mormon, also a first. And he was the first to place a B.C. and A.D. date with every story and event in the book.

His work on dating came in handy when he and his publishers came out with an illustrated *Book of Mormon Chronology Chart* in 1890. That same year another brainstorm hit George. Why not use all this data to make a dictionary of Book of Mormon terms? He
quickly arranged all the proper names of people, hills, valleys, rivers, and cities into alphabetical order, supplementing individual entries as necessary. His publisher friend and neighbor Joseph Hyrum Parry prepared the book quickly for publication, and it went on sale in January 1892. Had he been as blessed as we are with superlative word processing, the diligent George Reynolds would probably have been done several months earlier! His preface to *A Dictionary of the Book of Mormon* demonstrates his feelings of consecration to the Lord’s work and the Lord’s people:

The increasing interest taken in the study of the Book of Mormon and in the history of the peoples whose origin, progress and destruction it narrates, encourages the author of this little work to think that this addition to the literature of the subject will not be like one born out of due time, but will be received as an acceptable aid to the study of its sacred pages. To the members of Theological Classes of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, whether of the quorums of the Priesthood, of the Sunday Schools, Church Schools or Improvement Associations, we particularly submit this book—the first of its kind—believing it will afford them material help in their investigations of Book of Mormon subjects, and their study of Nephite and Jaredite history; and we trust it will not be without value to every one who takes an interest in the races who rose, flourished and vanished in Ancient America.

This Dictionary contains the name of every person and place mentioned in the Book of Mormon, with a few other subjects of interest referred to therein.

With the hope that it may not be altogether unproductive of good, or of increasing true knowledge with regard to the handworkings of God in the history of the nations of the earth, this little volume is respectfully submitted to all who love the truth.  

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Throughout his life, George Reynolds wrote eight books and over 400 articles, plus a few poems, for Church periodicals and several newspapers.6 His books ranged in subject matter from Bible history to geography, from travel to biographies of famous men, from natural science to original stories, and from theology to spirited defense of gospel principles. He was considered by his peers to be one of the most learned men in the Church. He was entirely self taught. George had received no schooling since entering his bookkeeping apprenticeship as a teenager in London. Elder Heber J. Grant remarked that he never asked George a question but that he received an outstanding answer. His close associate in the Seventies, Elder Seymour B. Young, noted, “He was one of the most modest and retiring of men, never officious in his superiority but humble and quiet.”7 Perhaps it can be said that throughout his long and tiring labors, George Reynolds did more than any other person in the nineteenth century to train the youth of the Church in the teachings of the Book of Mormon.

Found many years after his death among his papers was a note in Reynolds’s handwriting: “If you find a customer undecided between the Story and the Dictionary, push the Dictionary.”8 He probably believed that the dictionary’s format was more conducive as a study aid to the Book of Mormon than his book The Story of the Book of Mormon; experience probably taught him that the latter was usually read alone, without the student delving into the Book of Mormon itself.

In my opinion, Reynolds’s Book of Mormon Dictionary is indeed an enduring book. Thus I applaud Stemmons Publishing Company for reproducing it for this generation’s Book of Mormon students. I am aware that some BYU Book of Mormon teachers have required that their students buy and use the Dictionary. A modern gospel student, of course, still has the need to identify every proper personal name and place name.

This dictionary, printed in several editions, emphasizes detail. For example, the entry for Amalekites reads:

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6 His bibliography is found in Van Orden, Prisoner for Conscience’ Sake, 221–35.
7 As cited in Van Orden, Prisoner for Conscience’ Sake, 211.
8 As cited in ibid., 165.
A sect of Nephite apostates whose origin is not given. Many of them were after the order of Nehor. Very early in the days of the republic they had affiliated with the Lamanites and with them built a large city, not far from the waters of Mormon, which they called Jerusalem. They were exceedingly crafty and hard-hearted, and in all the ministrations of the sons of Mosiah among them only one was converted. They led in the massacres of the Christian Lamanites or people of Anti-Nephi-Lehi; and in later years the Lamanite generals were in the habit of placing them in high command in their armies, because of their greater force of character, their intense hatred to their former brethren, and their more wicked and murderous disposition. In the sacred record they are generally associated with the Zoramites and Amulonites.9

The biggest weakness of the Dictionary, however, for modern readers is Reynolds’s identification of Book of Mormon sites with locations in North, Central, and South America. His extended geographical view that the Book of Mormon story took place essentially over the length and breadth of North and South America holds little appeal to present-day Book of Mormon scholars.

Modern Book of Mormon geography students might take issue with Reynolds’s identifications with known map locations, such as his assertion that the land Bountiful “extended southward from the Isthmus of Panama.”10 According to Reynolds, the Isthmus of Panama was the “narrow neck of land” in the Book of Mormon, a point disputed by most scholars affiliated with FARMS today.

His definitions present some problems for us today. For example, his entry for Cumorah, Hill reads:

One of the most noted places in ancient American history was the land in which was situated the hill known to the Jaredites as Ramah, and to the Nephites as

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Cumorah. In its vicinity two great races were exterminated; for it was there that the last battles were fought in the history of both people. There also the sacred records of the Nephites found their final resting place. . . . Moroni afterwards concealed the treasures committed to his keeping in the same hill, where they remained until they were by Heaven's permission, exhumed and translated by the Prophet Joseph Smith. This hill is situated about three or four miles from Palmyra, in the State of New York. 11

Reynolds would have been helpful in this and all other definitions if he had included Book of Mormon references for students to read and check on their own. It is obvious that he hadn't visited western New York State where Palmyra and the New York Cumorah were located. It is highly speculative and unreasonable to conclude that any major battles involving tens of thousands of soldiers—perhaps even hundreds of thousands in the case of the Jaredites—would have used the New York Cumorah, merely a small drumlin, as a base of operations for battle. And the Book of Mormon text never states that Moroni placed the sacred records back in the hill before he died. For all we know, Moroni could have deposited the plates in the New York hill, providentially near the youth Joseph Smith, after Moroni became an angel and had the unique capability of "fly[ing] through the midst of heaven" (Revelation 14:6).

But who am I to mercilessly fault George Reynolds for his pioneering efforts in Book of Mormon scholarship? At least he was the first to undertake such a massive and comprehensive study of the book and its text. Even Parley Pratt and Orson Pratt didn't do that. And as far as the Hill Cumorah and Middle America and South America go, no Mormon in the nineteenth century really had a chance to study those places in depth by travel, anthropology, and archaeology. Reynolds was merely fleshing out the traditional views that had developed through the extant writings of Oliver Cowdery, Parley Pratt, and Orson Pratt. To us in the late twentieth century falls the responsibility with all of our educational opportunities, computer options, and travel opportunities

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(all usually subsidized by tithing funds) to arrive at more complete and perhaps more accurate, yet still tentative, conclusions.

Yes, Reynolds’s dictionary entries were devotional in nature. So what? It was nothing more than a reflection of an absolutely selfless and pure soul who showed his complete allegiance to God and his glory. I’m inspired by George’s reference to righteous Book of Mormon figures like Nephi (“the most lovable of men, true as steel, never wavering, full of integrity, faith and zeal”) and Alma the Younger (“an unceasing missionary, an undaunted soldier of the cross, a lucid expounder of the principles of the everlasting Gospel; a proficient organizer of men, a distinguished warrior and a triumphant general”).

So, again, I commend Stemmons Publishing for making available to us Book of Mormon Dictionary. They did a capital job of accurately reproducing Reynolds’ exact text in a larger format. One thing they should have done, though, is make bolder all the words that are the titles of the actual articles. It is not easy for the eye to distinguish the separate entries on a page.

I now turn to the well-known seven-volume Reynolds-Sjodahl Commentary on the Book of Mormon. May I be so bold as to label this work a fraud? It is a fraud, because the compiler of these volumes in the 1950s, Philip C. Reynolds, pulled a fast one on us. He made it look as if George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl had collaborated on this project and indeed together had produced this lengthy and extensive commentary. Nothing of the sort happened at all.

I can find absolutely no evidence that Reynolds and Sjodahl collaborated in any way during their lifetimes. Perhaps they knew each other, but that’s all. Sjodahl worked for the Deseret News starting in 1890. That is the same year George Reynolds was called to the First Seven Presidents of the Seventy. Reynolds probably knew everybody in Salt Lake City who was in any way connected with Church employment. But Reynolds had a severe stroke in 1907, from which he never recovered, and died in 1909. Sjodahl didn’t even get into the Book of Mormon commentary business until a decade after Reynolds was dead. Yes, Sjodahl referred often to Reynolds’s Story of the Book of Mormon in arti-

cles for the *Improvement Era* and in his own commentary, *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*, published in 1927 by Deseret News Press. These references were generally out of respect to significant contributions to certain areas of Book of Mormon scholarship by Reynolds. On the whole, however, I see Sjodahl as an independent writer with a singular style of his own. He did not imitate Reynolds in any way; indeed, he frequently differed with conclusions drawn by Reynolds.

How then did the names of Reynolds and Sjodahl become united to the extent that many modern students of the Book of Mormon consider the pair to be inseparable in their work? The answer lies in the retirement work of Philip C. Reynolds.

Phil Reynolds was both a son to George Reynolds and a son-in-law to Janne M. Sjodahl. Phil was born 24 July 1890 to the third wife of George Reynolds, Mary Gould. He married Lila Sjodahl 19 March 1919. Phil was nineteen when his father died and nearly twenty-nine when he married Sjodahl’s daughter. George Reynolds and Janne Sjodahl would therefore not have known each other through any mutual relationship to Phil.

Phil Reynolds became a mining engineer by profession. At the age of sixty-one in 1951, he suffered a stroke, and during his long convalescence, he turned his attention to the writings of both his father and father-in-law. With the help of a son-in-law, David S. King, later a Utah Congressman, Phil Reynolds produced the seven-volume *Commentary*.

Upon even casual reading of *Story of the Book of Mormon* and *Dictionary of the Book of Mormon*, it is obvious that Phil lifted wholesale portions of both works and inserted them verbatim into the seven-volume collection. This Phil did without the slightest acknowledgment in his prefaces or footnotes. He also did the same with Sjodahl’s *An Introduction to the Study of the Book of Mormon*. He apparently also used some of Sjodahl’s unpublished notes. Clearly Phil linked a great deal of the commentary together by his own writings.

What I find most objectionable is the appearance that *Commentary* was written by both men, Reynolds and Sjodahl. The introductory comments read as if Reynolds and Sjodahl had collaborated and that Phil completed the work that had not been finished. The pronouns *we* and *our* are found frequently in the text.
implying joint authorship. Certainly there is no noting of which author wrote which pieces.

Both the Improvement Era and the Church News wrote favorable reviews about Phil Reynolds’s work of editing and gathering. What would cause Philip C. Reynolds to cover up the real manner in which he compiled his publications? The Reynolds family were amused at Phil’s actions. They knew him then to be an inactive member of the Latter-day Saint Church. Family stories still exist of Phil’s smoking large cigars in a room filled with semipornographic Vargas Girls drawings while working on Commentary. Perhaps Phil was motivated by a desire to make money during his retirement as well as to further the election chances of David S. King. Certainly Phil grabbed the copyright for all of his father’s works and reprinted them and gathered all the royalties. Phil also put together an equally fraudulent Reynolds-Sjodahl Commentary on the Pearl of Great Price.

I feel that Commentary on the Book of Mormon is a travesty on the names of George Reynolds and Janne M. Sjodahl. Many students and scholars have spoken to me about the frustration they have had with the volumes, and in their minds they may have blamed the supposed authors for various inefficiencies and incongruencies. I sincerely hope that this review will help revitalize the well-deserved outstanding reputation that George Reynolds held in his day and encourage people to look into the works of Janne M. Sjodahl on their own merits.

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14 Interview with Grant Reynolds Hardy, grandson of George Reynolds and nephew of Philip C. Reynolds, Salt Lake City, Utah, 28 July 1981.

Reviewed by Terry B. Ball

While I was standing in a check-out line, an inquisitive sales clerk pointed to the book I was holding in my hand and asked, “What’s that?” I held up the volume for her to read the title, “The Allegory of the Olive Tree, edited by Stephen D. Ricks and John W. Welch.” Upon reading the title she exclaimed, “They wrote all that about the allegory of the olive tree?” The curious clerk’s incredulous response may well be representative of what many will think when first seeing this hefty volume on the shelf, yet those who read it will find it more fascinating than formidable. The book is a well-constructed anthology of articles that should prove to be the definitive work on the subject for years to come.

The contributions within the collection can be roughly grouped into five genres of studies: interpretive, comparative, historical, textual, and botanical. The lay reader will find the interpretive and botanical papers inspiring and insightful, while the comparative, textual, and historical works present a plethora of well-researched data to occupy the scholar.

Interpretive Studies

Of the interpretive studies in the volume, Paul Y. Hoskisson’s “The Allegory of the Olive Tree in Jacob” is the most comprehensive. Hoskisson offers a nice mixture of analytic, homiletic, and historical commentary as he answers four questions.

First, what do the symbols of the allegory represent? Second, why did Jacob include the allegory in his book of scripture? Third, to what historical events does the allegory allude in outlining God’s dealings with the
house of Israel? And fourth, what does the allegory have to say to us today? (p. 70)

In Hoskisson's answers to these questions the reader will find carefully reasoned conclusions which, along with two similar works noted by Hoskisson,¹ are representative of most modern paradigms for understanding the allegory.

M. Catherine Thomas offers another paradigm by which the allegory can be interpreted. She suggests that the primary purpose of the allegory was to teach us of one aspect of the atonement, that of "the Lord's on-going labors to bring his children back into oneness with him" (p. 12). Truman G. Madsen validates Thomas's approach in his contribution as he discusses how much of the atonement was associated with, and symbolized by, the olive, the olive tree, the olive press, and olive oil.

Arthur Henry King's contribution to the volume presents still another approach to studying and interpreting Zenos's allegory or parable, as he prefers to call it.² He demonstrates how much can be learned from evaluating the language of the parable, and how it is constructed, i.e., considering such elements as "length of sentence, clause, phrase; stress intonation; word, sense, and image; scheme, trope; metaphor, topos, myth" (p. 141). His aim is to find "'rhetorical truth,' in distinction from 'logical truth,'" in the parable (p. 141). As King analyzes the allegory using this enlightening approach, one finds that the rhetorical truths he uncovers lead to some important questions about, and insights into, the logical truths as well.

While the above contributions reflect modern interpretations of the allegory, Grant Underwood's contribution, "Jacob 5 in the Nineteenth Century," explores how the allegory was understood in the early period of the restored Church. Not surprisingly, the early interpretations of the allegory, especially those offered by


² For a discussion of the issue of nomenclature, see David Rolph Seely, "The Allegory of the Olive Tree and the Use of Related Figurative Language in the Ancient Near East and the Old Testament" (pp. 290–92).
Orson Pratt, appear very similar to those offered by Hoskisson and other recent commentators. Underwood also points out how early Church leaders occasionally found passages taken from the allegory useful in making a homiletic point. He notes that, in spite of the fact that the allegory was recognized as "one of the plainest parables, and sublimest prophecies" (p. 67) in the canonized corpus, it received relatively little attention in the teachings of early Church leaders.

Although early Church leaders may not have mentioned Zenos's writings often, the thesis of Noel B. Reynolds's contribution, "Nephite Uses and Interpretations of Zenos," is that the Book of Mormon prophets and authors did indeed frequently turn to Zenos for inspiration. He presents an impressive list of instances from the Book of Mormon wherein the words and themes of Zenos's teachings may be either quoted or paraphrased. The striking number of cognates to Zenos's language and teachings in the words of other prophets and teachers is a recurring theme in several of the comparative studies reported in the volume.

Comparative Studies

Several of the contributions evaluate what can be learned about Zenos's allegory from other ancient texts containing similar themes and language. These valuable studies also frequently seek to identify a reason for the striking number of cognates to Zenos's allegory in other texts. In "The Last Words of Cenez and the Book of Mormon," John W. Welch considers how a text found in Pseudo-Philo dealing with a man named Cenez compares with what is attributed to Zenos and Zenock in the Book of Mormon. After carefully and thoroughly noting the cognates and some historical considerations, Welch suggests that, while Cenez most likely was not the same person as Zenos or Zenock, "perhaps they were associates, cousins, or known to each other" (p. 319), and thus arise the similar language and themes in the texts.

In another study, David Rolph Seely and John W. Welch explore the cognates to Zenos's allegory in Old Testament texts, finally concluding that one simple explanation for the similarities
is that "Zenos probably preceded Psalms 52 and 80 by a few years and Hosea, Isaiah, and Jeremiah by several generations, and that all these later prophets knew and drew upon Zenos, often quite specifically" (pp. 343–44).

In the same fashion, John A. Tvedtnes, in his study entitled "Borrowings from the Parable of Zenos," examines similarities to Zenos’s allegory in both the Bible and extracanonical books. After compiling an impressive and provocative collection of cognates, Tvedtnes affirms that "the corpus dealt with here leads me to conclude that a large number of other documents have borrowed from Zenos" (p. 415).

James E. Faulconer is more cautious in his explanation for the similarities to Zenos found in Romans 11. In identifying the similarities, Faulconer also notes the presence of significant differences. Rather than attributing the provenance of the similarities directly to Zenos, he suggests it is more likely that Paul had access to “some textual intermediary—such as a quotation [of Zenos] in a third text” (p. 358)—that influenced his writings in Romans 11. He discounts the notion that the striking cognates are due simply to a shared rhetorical tradition. Gary P. Gillum’s bibliography of commentaries to Romans 11:17–24 provides a nice reference for additional study of the passage.

While Faulconer is not convinced that a shared rhetorical tradition can adequately explain the similarities between Romans 11 and Zenos’s allegory, David Rolph Seely’s observations, reported in his contribution dealing with related figurative language in ancient Near East texts, suggest that the abundance of cognates to Zenos may indeed be due to such a shared tradition. While noting that Zenos’s allegory is unique in its "length, scope, detail, [and] span of history" (p. 294), he concludes that "the allegory of the olive tree relies on common comparisons known elsewhere, which are easily understood by people who are closely connected with agriculture in terms of tree and plant husbandry, productivity, and harvesting" (p. 301).

While it is plausible that Zenos’s writings were widely circulated in the ancient Near East and thus influenced many other writers, it is also likely that many of the cognates to Zenos in other documents are simply the natural product of a people who share a common rhetorical tradition and agricultural background.
Because botanical metaphors, based especially on vegetation important to the people, are used so frequently by biblical prophets to teach the covenant people, it would seem strange if there were not some that dealt with the olive. For example, in Isaiah alone we find the prophet using more than 300 botanical metaphors to teach the covenant people about “their relationship to God, their need for repentance, their future according to His plan, and the ministry of their Messiah.” At least 20 different taxa are used in these more than 300 botanical metaphors. Naturally, because of its economic and agricultural import during Isaiah’s time, the olive is one of the taxa used, though explicitly only twice (Isaiah 17:6; 24:13). It seems likely Isaiah would have used the olive in these botanical metaphors whether or not he was aware of Zenos’s allegory.

If one were looking for a provenance for the ubiquitous use of botanical metaphor, especially that involving the likening of the covenant people to an olive tree, possibly that provenance identified by Nephi ought to be given first consideration. In Nephi’s explanation of the metaphor to his brethren, he said, “Behold, I say unto you, that the house of Israel was compared unto an olive-tree, by the Spirit of the Lord which was in our father” (1 Nephi 15:12). Could it be that the Psalmist, Zenos, Isaiah, Paul, Jeremiah, Hosea, and others likened Israel to an olive tree not because they all had access to a common text, but rather because they all had access to the Spirit of the Lord?

Historical Studies

A number of the contributions in the volume seek to add understanding to Zenos’s allegory by considering the historical origin, significance, use, and cultivation of the olive in the ancient Near East. John Gee and Daniel C. Peterson explore the topic in regard to the “Pre-Modern Mediterranean” world, while Stephen D. Ricks does the same for the “Second Temple Era and Early

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4 Olives may have also been included in many generic references to trees by Isaiah and certainly were involved in his references to oil.
Rabbinic Period.” The authors of both articles demonstrate careful scholarship as they consider topics both marginally and directly related to the allegory. The value of this genre of study is well illustrated as the authors are able to demonstrate and conclude that the composer of the allegory of the olive tree must have been well acquainted with ancient olive culture and its significance—someone like Zenas rather than a New World farm boy.

Three of the historical studies in the volume consider the use and symbolism of the olive in ancient religions. John Franklin Hall considers the issue in regard to Greco-Roman religion, Donald W. Parry does the same for ritual anointings in ancient Israelite religion, while John A. Tvedtnes explores the symbolism of the olive in ancient Israel and early Christian religions.

Hall notes that the olive played a more significant role in Greek than Roman religion. He suggests that such is the case because the Greeks were more influenced by Minoan Crete, which he identifies as the first culture to domesticate the olive. Although he found little in his study that reflected directly on Zenos’s allegory, he did observe that “for the Athenians the sacred tree of Athena [the olive] was the sacred symbolic tree of their race” (p. 256). The metaphor is reminiscent of Zenos’s likening the house or “race” of Israel to the olive tree.

Parry offers a fine review of the use and symbolism of olive oil in ritual anointings in ancient Israel. He centers most of his discussion on the ritual anointing of priests, prophets, and kings. A thorough discussion of ritual anointings in purification rites, e.g., Leviticus 14:15–18, is lacking. Still Parry is successful in establishing a precedent for a sacred connection between the olive and the House of Israel.

Tvedtnes entitled his historical study “Olive Oil: Symbol of the Holy Ghost,” yet he explores the symbolism of the olive in scripture and early Christian tradition far beyond its relationship to the Holy Ghost. Tvedtnes is an especially thorough scholar, leading him to include material on occasion that may be superfluous and not always germane to the topic at hand, e.g., “Among cannibals, the eating of human flesh is done not for nourishment but in an attempt to gain the strength of the slain enemy. Thus, eating Christ’s flesh symbolically gives us his qualities” (p. 442). The connection between cannibal and Christian theology seems
both strained and strange in his discussion of olive symbolism. Yet, much of what he discusses is applicable, and the persistent reader can glean some valuable information on the topic from Tvedtnes’s efforts.

**Textual Studies**

Textual studies in the volume include a contribution by Royal Skousen detailing textual variants between manuscripts and editions of the Book of Mormon and an analysis by John W. Welch of words and phrases used in the allegory. Skousen’s report on the textual variations between manuscripts and editions reveals no startling shifts in doctrine or language between various versions of the allegory, but it does provide a valuable resource for those interested in a critical text of the work.

Welch renders a valuable service to students of Jacob 5 by cataloguing the distribution and frequency of words used in the allegory. In addition to this frequency and distribution study, Welch analyzes the words and phrases of the allegory to determine if they can reveal any information on its origin. He observes that the text has more affinities to the Old Testament than the New Testament. As one piece of evidence for his observation, he notes that more words and phrases from the allegory are used either exclusively or commonly in the Old Testament than in the New Testament. One would expect such to be the case in light of the fact that the Old Testament is a considerably larger document, covering a much wider range of topics, over a longer period of time. Overall, the material provided by Welch in this study can be an important resource for those interested in doing the kind of rhetorical analysis demonstrated by Arthur Henry King in his contribution to the volume discussed above.

**Botanical Studies**

One of the enigmatic aspects of Zenos’s allegory is the use of the term *vineyard* to refer to what is obviously an *olive orchard*. Was Zenos or Jacob confused in the use of the term in this allegory? John Tvedtnes addresses the question in a botanical and lexical study. He presents convincing evidence to support his conclusion that “the use of the term ‘vineyard’ to depict a place
where olive trees were planted is not an error in the Zenos account in Jacob 5, but that it is perfectly in keeping with ancient practices and with the imagery of the vineyard” (pp. 481–82).

Perhaps one of the most significant contributions to this volume is that of Wilford M. Hess, Daniel J. Fairbanks, John W. Welch, and Jonathan K. Driggs. They present a fine scientific treatise in a report entitled the “Botanical Aspects of Olive Culture Relevant to Jacob 5.” Their treatment offers important insights and clarifications to the allegory that may not be understood by one unfamiliar with olive trees and olive horticulture. (The need for some scientific understanding to best interpret the allegory is illustrated by one commentator who draws some interesting doctrinal opinions from a mistaken assumption that plant vascular fluids are equivalent to oil formed in fruits [p. 16].) This study reveals that while most of the horticultural practices and results recorded in the allegory are in line with what one would expect from a people familiar with growing olives, there are some anomalies. The authors suggest that the anomalies may be intentional in order to intensify the message. The contribution finishes with fifty-six questions regarding the botanical aspects of the allegory and olive culture in general. Some of the most poignant insights contained in the entire volume can be found in answers given to those questions.

Reviewed by David Rolph Seely

Avraham Gileadi is a scholar who has already published two significant books on Isaiah for a Latter-day Saint audience: *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah* and *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon.*¹ The *Literary Message of Isaiah* is written to a larger non-LDS audience, and in fact has recently been advertised in a catalog for a Christian book club as a work “respected by both liberal and conservative scholars.”² Gileadi does, on at least one occasion, refer to the Book of Mormon in the footnotes (p. 2 n. 3), but this book is written to a wider audience. It will be interesting to see how this work is regarded by “both liberal and conservative” secular scholars. One of the arguments made in this book is for the literary unity of the book of Isaiah, and this has important implications for Book of Mormon and biblical studies.

**The Book of Mormon and Isaiah**

Biblical scholars for the last two hundred years have put forth arguments for the composite authorship of the 66 chapters in the prophetic book of Isaiah. The current scholarly consensus is that chapters 1–39 of Isaiah were written by a preexilic author from


² *CBD Academic Catalog* Fall/Winter 1995, p. 6. Christian Book Distributors is a good place to buy scholarly and nonscholarly books on the Bible at a discount. For example, Gileadi’s *Literary Message of Isaiah* can be purchased through Christian Book Distributors for $16.95 rather than the $25.00 price listed on the inside of the dustjacket. The address is Christian Book Distributors, P.O. Box 7000, Peabody, MA 01961-7000.
the seventh century, chapters 40–55 by a postexilic author many scholars call Second Isaiah, and chapters 56–66 by a so-called Third Isaiah who lived even later. The argument for multiple authorship is based on what scholars perceive to be differences in style, vocabulary, and theology between the various units. In addition, many scholars cannot accept the idea of prophecy: that Isaiah could actually have seen into the future and predicted with such accuracy and such detail the conditions that would follow the exile. For example, in chapters 40–55 large portions of text appear to be written to an Israelite audience in captivity in Babylon more than a hundred years into the future from the time of Isaiah. In addition, twice in this section Isaiah mentions the name Cyrus (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1)—the Persian king who would conquer Babylon in 539 B.C. Thus scholars deduce that Isaiah 40–55 must have been written by someone after the exile who was familiar with the Babylonian captivity and the rise of Cyrus.

In contrast to this theory, the Book of Mormon claims to have access to the book of Isaiah through the brass plates at a date no later than 600 B.C. and contains quotations both from the chapters scholars consider to be First Isaiah, 1–39, as well as from chapters 40–55, which scholars consider to be Second Isaiah. The authors of the Book of Mormon are also capable, as was Isaiah, of prophesying events in the future with great detail and precision, and Nephi clearly addresses a latter-day audience in his writings. Thus Latter-day Saints are committed to the idea of the unity of Isaiah, in that passages thought to be late by scholars are attested already by 600 B.C. in the Book of Mormon. In addition, Latter-day Saints are committed to the possibility and reality of a prophet’s seeing into the future and addressing a future audience. Gileadi, in Literary Message, presents a sophisticated and cogent argument for the literary unity of Isaiah, which he uses to support his beliefs that Isaiah could indeed see into the future and that the central message of Isaiah is directed to an audience in our day.

*Literary Message* consists of an introduction in which Gileadi carefully explains the methodology of his interpretation of Isaiah (pp. 1–43), a detailed interpretation and discussion of each of the

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3 For example, 2 Nephi 12–24 = Isaiah 2–12; 1 Nephi 20–21 = Isaiah 48–49; 2 Nephi 6:16–8:25 = Isaiah 49:24–52:2; 2 Nephi 9:50–51 = Isaiah 55:1–2; 2 Nephi 27 = Isaiah 29; Mosiah 14 = Isaiah 53; etc.
seven parallel units of Isaiah identified in the Bifid Structure (pp. 45–275), Gileadi’s “new” translation of the book of Isaiah (271–404), a list of selected reference works (p. 405), a comprehensive concordance of Isaiah based on his translation (pp. 406–565), an index to the literary analysis of Isaiah containing the main terms and expressions Gileadi finds in his translation and interprets in his discussion (pp. 566–603), and finally a short bibliography (pp. 604–10).

Introduction

As explained in his introduction (pp. 33–39), Gileadi, in his graduate work, studied Isaiah under the direction of the late R. K. Harrison, a biblical scholar at the Toronto School of Theology who believed in the unity of Isaiah. Harrison introduced Gileadi to the work of another scholar, William Brownlee, who argued that the literary structure of Isaiah was to be found in a two-part division of the book, each division containing seven categories of parallel subject matter. Brownlee claimed the same structure could also be found in the biblical books of Joshua, Ezekiel, and Daniel. Gileadi analyzed and significantly developed and revised Brownlee’s basic thesis and formally presented his findings in his doctoral dissertation, “A Holistic Structure of the Book of Isaiah.”

Gileadi sees the structure of Isaiah as two parallel sections of 33 chapters each, which he calls the “Bifid Structure.” The Bifid Structure is mentioned in the two previously published volumes and provides the basis for some of Gileadi’s interpretations there. However, in Literary Message the Bifid Structure is much more developed and provides the framework for Gileadi’s discussion and interpretation. Although the organization of the book is different and the presentation of Gileadi’s interpretation in Literary Message is expanded and presented with more detail, much of the contents of this book will be familiar to a reader who has read either of Gileadi’s previous books on Isaiah.

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Methodology of the Holistic Approach

Gileadi defines his approach to Isaiah as the “holistic approach,” meaning the book of Isaiah should be read as a whole, and that it can only be properly interpreted as a complete work, rather than as two or three separate units. In addition, at the beginning of his work Gileadi clearly affirms his belief that Isaiah had the power to look into the future and to see “the end from the beginning.” This assumption is consistently maintained throughout his book. Gileadi first introduces the “interpretive keys . . . to a sealed book” (p. 2). He identifies these keys as the spirit of prophecy, understanding the manner of prophecy of the Jews, searching the words of Isaiah, and an understanding of types. These keys will be familiar to readers of the Book of Mormon since the “spirit of prophecy” comes from 2 Nephi 25:4; “manner of prophesying” from 2 Nephi 25:1; and “searching” Isaiah from 3 Nephi 23:1. The idea of types is also a common idea in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 17:41; 2 Nephi 11:4; 25:20, etc.).

Gileadi identifies the tools of his “holistic approach” as a combination of three well-known scholarly tools: “first, structural analysis, which examines prophetic meanings embedded in the manner of organizing the material; second, rhetorical analysis, which examines the meanings of individual terms and expressions, particularly as they connect different parts of the text; and third, typological analysis, which examines events out of the past that may foreshadow the future” (p. 10). He effectively explains each of these approaches in terms that can be understood by a layperson. Under structural analysis he discusses several different governing structures of the book of Isaiah, such as apostasy (Isaiah 1–9), judgment (Isaiah 10–34), restoration (Isaiah 35–59), and salvation (Isaiah 60–66); the organizing principle of covenantal curses (Isaiah 1–39) and blessings (Isaiah 40–66); and the so-called Bifid Structure. This is the structure first identified by Brownlee that Gileadi uses as the framework for his interpretation of the text of Isaiah; it consists of “seven different categories of parallel subject matter whose themes are arranged chiastically” (p. 15). The seven themes are as follows:
Gileadi, **Literary Message of Isaiah (Seely)**

1 Ruin and Rebirth  
2 Rebellion and Compliance  
3 Punishment and Deliverance  
4 Humiliation and Exaltation  
5 Suffering and Salvation  
6 Disloyalty and Loyalty  
7 Disinheritance and Inheritance

Also in conjunction with literary analysis, Gileadi briefly discusses lawsuit, messenger speech, woe oracle, prophetic lament, priestly sermon, parable, song of salvation, and parallelism.

In his discussion of rhetorical analysis Gileadi presents “rhetorical connections”—the connections between words and concepts that provide much of the data for his interpretation, metaphors, and “reading between the lines.”

The discussion of typology is particularly important to Gileadi’s work. In summarizing his understanding of prophecy in Isaiah, he says:

Isaiah consistently uses episodes out of Israel’s past as types upon which to frame prophecies of the future. Having seen the end from the beginning in a great cosmic vision, he was able to view both Israel’s ancient history (particularly his own day) and also the last days, the time of the end. He thus carefully frames his words in such a way as to capture both time periods in a single prophecy. (p. 27)

Gileadi cites a series of examples in Isaiah of historical precedents for latter-day events: the Creation of the temporal world prefigures the millennial or heavenly world, the calling of Abraham out of the land of Babylon is a type of the calling of a covenant people from the world, and the exoduses from Egypt and again from Babylon in 539 B.C. prefigure a latter-day exodus from Babylon. Likewise, Gileadi sees ancient biblical figures such as Abraham, Moses, David, Hezekiah, and Cyrus as types of future servants of the Lord.

Gileadi’s presentation of this material is clear and concise. He makes complex scholarly tools accessible to the layperson. Most, if not all, the tools mentioned in this section are standard methods
used by biblical scholars in the analysis of the Bible. Scholars have long recognized the working of types and typologies in the book of Isaiah, but they do not always agree on their interpretation. Gileadi's contribution to Isaiah studies is the unique way he interprets the types within the Bifid Structure and the way he reads all the prophecies of Isaiah as being addressed and relevant to a latter-day audience.

Gileadi's Interpretation of Isaiah

This section represents Gileadi's interpretation of and commentary on Isaiah. Here Gileadi applies the tools of his holistic methodology to the text of Isaiah. He reads and interprets each of the seven units of the Bifid Structure, discussing the structure, the rhetoric and the types found in each pair of parallel passages; he develops his various types; and he interprets all the prophecies of Isaiah as referring to a future series of events that lead to the Second Coming and the Millennium.

Through the "holistic" approach Gileadi is able to see many unifying connections throughout the book of Isaiah. By reading the text of Isaiah according to the Bifid Structure, the author and the reader begin to see many connections in the Isaiah text that are not easily noted in a straight reading. For example, when reading Isaiah 6-8 along with 36-40, a distinct contrast is noted between Ahaz and Hezekiah and their peoples (pp. 59-65); when reading chapters 24-27 along with 48-54 one can see comparisons with the universal distress and salvation described in the apocalyptic chapters 24-27 and the suffering servant described in chapters 52-53 (pp. 173-213). Gileadi also recognizes important themes found in sections of Isaiah not part of the Bifid Structure. For example, he discusses how the theme of the Tyrant in Isaiah 14, from Unit 4: Humiliation and Exaltation, can be juxtaposed with the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53, from Unit 5: Suffering and Salvation (pp. 164-70).

Throughout this portion of the book, Gileadi develops various types: Zion, Babylon, the king of Babylon/Assyria and a series of servants he calls the Davidic king, the Righteous Warrior figure, the Servant figure, and the Cyrus figure—each based on various combinations of the characteristics of Abraham, Moses, David,
Cyrus, and others. Each of these types, for Gileadi, refers to specific future entities who will be involved in latter-day events. His interpretation of Babylon as the archenemy of Zion and the king of Babylon/Assyria as the tool in the hand of the Lord to punish the wicked will be familiar to many readers.

Gileadi’s interpretation and heavy emphasis on a latter-day servant he calls the Davidic king, however, have proven somewhat controversial among Latter-day Saint scholars. Throughout Isaiah are prophecies of an agent of God, an anointed one or Messiah, who will bring spiritual and temporal salvation to his children. For example, Isaiah 9:6–7 relates: “unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder. . . . Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end”; Isaiah 53:5 speaks of one who was “wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities”; and Isaiah 61:1–2 prophesies of the anointed one who will come to “preach good tidings to the meek” and “proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God.” Christian and Latter-day Saint scholars usually interpret these passages as referring to one servant, Jesus Christ, who will at his first coming bring spiritual salvation through the atonement, and who will then bring temporal salvation at his second coming when he appears in his glory. Gileadi, on the other hand, argues for two different agents to dispense these salvations—a servant figure, Jesus Christ, who will bring spiritual salvation, and a latter-day Davidic king who will bring temporal salvation. For example, Gileadi reads Isaiah 9:6–7 and Isaiah 61:1–2 as a reference to the Davidic king. He interprets Isaiah 53:1–10 as a prophecy of the atonement of Christ dispensing spiritual salvation, but Isaiah 53:11–12 as the Davidic king, dispensing temporal salvation. These interpretations create obvious scriptural problems: Jesus read Isaiah 61:1–2 in the synagogue in Nazareth as finding its fulfillment through him (Luke 4:16–21), and Abinadi, in the Book of Mormon, interprets all of Isaiah 53 as a prophecy of Jesus Christ (Mosiah 14–15). Gileadi, of course, is aware of these passages and offers a detailed defense of his interpretation. Bruce D. Porter has discussed the issue of the Davidic king at length in his review of Gileadi’s previous work,
The Book of Isaiah, in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon.\(^6\)

This particular point demonstrates the idiosyncratic nature of some of Gileadi’s interpretations.

From the themes identified in the Bifid Structure and the types developed throughout Isaiah, Gileadi develops a detailed interpretation of the prophecies of Isaiah that outlines the sequence of events leading up to the end of time. He summarizes these events in his “Conclusion” to this section (pp. 249–70). In Literary Message Gileadi’s discussion of these eschatological events is couched in more general terms than in his two previous books, in which he discusses the events in specific Latter-day Saint terminology. Briefly, Gileadi argues that in the latter days the world will divide itself between Zion and Babylon; the Lord will test his people, and some will align themselves with Babylon and some with Zion; Zion will be redeemed and participate in a “new exodus” out of Babylon; the Lord’s servant, the Davidic king, will come and dispense temporal salvation to the people. The climax is, of course, the return of the Lord, the king of Zion, who has delivered his people from death through the atonement.

**The “New Translation”; Concordance and Index to Literary Analysis**

Gileadi properly began his study of Isaiah with his own translation of the text of Isaiah from Hebrew to English. A copy of his translation also appeared in each of his two previous books. Gileadi’s translation is divided into poetic lines, which makes the reading of the poetic sections of Isaiah much easier. Reading Isaiah in poetic lines can be very useful to a Latter-day Saint reader of the scriptures who is familiar only with the King James Version, which does not divide the poetic lines in the Bible. In addition, Gileadi has incorporated readings from the Dead Sea Scrolls and from the ancient Greek translation of the Old Testament called the Septuagint (LXX), which he believes help to clarify problematic words or phrases in the Masoretic Text (the Hebrew text behind the translation of the King James Version).

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Each of these readings is briefly explained with a footnote. Gileadi’s argument for the literary unity of the book of Isaiah is based on the complex relationship between various portions of Isaiah as reflected in vocabulary and concepts. In order to help understand this relationship he has provided cross-references to other relevant passages in Isaiah throughout his translation.

At the end of the volume Gileadi has added “A Comprehensive Concordance of the Book of Isaiah,” which lists the reference of every important word in Isaiah as found in Gileadi’s translation. This is a useful tool in case one wishes to check the occurrences of a term in Isaiah: “anointed,” “Assyria,” “David,” or “Zion,” etc. He has also included an “Index to the Literary Analysis of Isaiah” including the important terms and expressions appearing in the literary analysis of Isaiah throughout his book.

The reader should always remember that any translation is an interpretation of the text. Thus Gileadi’s translation is the basis for his interpretation, and at the same time Gileadi’s interpretation has, no doubt, influenced his translation. The neatness of the concordance and the index suggests to the inexperienced reader that the relationship between the Hebrew and the English words is simple, clear, and indisputable. Gileadi has worked hard for accuracy and consistency, but English cannot replace the Hebrew text. The translation, concordance, and index should be used as tools to understand better how Gileadi reads Isaiah, but they should not be mistaken for an indisputable key to the Hebrew text of Isaiah. A reader not familiar with Hebrew should consult different translations besides Gileadi. Since many readers consult a commentary on Isaiah to look up a specific passage, this book would benefit greatly from a scripture index.

**Literary Message as a Commentary on Isaiah**

Gileadi is a scholar who loves the writings of Isaiah and who has devoted much of his life to the study of this important book. *Literary Message* introduces the reader to many useful approaches for reading Isaiah as well as other biblical texts: structural analysis, rhetorical analysis, and the study of types. There are many different ways of writing a scholarly commentary on Isaiah. Some Isaiah commentaries present many different possible interpreta-
tions for each biblical passage. The reader is then left to choose for her- or himself which makes the most sense. One of the strengths of such commentaries is that they properly communicate to the reader the complexities involved in scriptural interpretation. One of the drawbacks of such a commentary is that the nonscholarly reader often does not have the critical abilities to decide which interpretation is correct, and often it is very difficult to get a clear view of bigger issues in a biblical book. The reader seeking for the single "correct" interpretation is left frustrated.

Another approach to writing a commentary on Isaiah is to develop a model that will explain all the passages of the book and then to approach each passage as it fits into the greater whole. The strength of such a commentary is that it is more readable, and a reader is able to grasp large central issues of the work and to understand smaller individual passages in light of bigger themes. The weakness of such an approach is that it often obscures contrary points of view, and the uncritical reader of such a commentary is left with the feeling that the particular interpretation of a passage given in the commentary is the only one possible, and is only able to understand each passage of Isaiah in light of the overall interpretation of the author.

By the very nature of Gileadi's approach—the holistic approach—Literary Message is an example of this latter method of commentary. It is a single sustained interpretation of Isaiah seeking to explain each passage in light of larger themes and units. At the beginning of his work Gileadi gives his basic assumptions, explains his methodology, and throughout his commentary he then vigorously argues his interpretations. The strength of the work is to provide a model, or models, by which the text of Isaiah can be explored, to point out many unified overarching themes, to make many new connections within the text, and to conclude with a unified interpretation of all the prophecies found in the text. At the same time an undiscriminating reader is left to believe that this is the only conceivable way to read Isaiah. But many different ways of interpreting various passages in Isaiah are still possible. In particular, many of the types which Gileadi develops, such as the Davidic king, and the sequence of events he reconstructs are open to various reconstructions and interpretations.
This is an important addition to scholarship on the literary unity of Isaiah both for scholars and nonscholars alike. It is written by a man who has dedicated many years of his life to the serious study of Isaiah, who knows much about Hebrew and the manner of prophesying of the Jews, and who believes that Isaiah truly did have a prophetic vision of the “end from the beginning” (p. 249). But readers must bring critical skills to the reading of commentaries. Just as Gileadi has critically read and interpreted Isaiah, so must the reader critically read and examine Gileadi’s interpretation of Isaiah.

We must always remember that the Lord has commanded us to read Isaiah (3 Nephi 23:1–3). That is our task. Commentaries such as Literary Message can be read and critically examined for possible insights but must be used to redirect our attention to the writings of Isaiah. A commentary should never be read as a substitute for Isaiah. The critical reader will find much of value in this book as well as much that is disputable. Students of Isaiah will do well to consult several different translations, and several different commentaries in their studies, especially by turning to the scriptural interpretations of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and the other standard works, as well as in the writings of modern prophets.
There are so many errors that are readily demonstrated and without a great investment of time and research.

Charles Crane

*Ashamed of Joseph* begins with an experience the author had in Salt Lake City, Utah. In brief, the author visited Temple Square and noticed that there was not one word mentioned about Joseph Smith. We were not taken to his statue; the large paintings were gone; and the diorama of Joseph receiving his first vision had vanished (it had been transformed into a meeting room). . . . This prompted me to ask several questions of the young lady who was our guide; . . . when I began to ask questions about Joseph Smith, she seemed reticent to answer. Finally, I pressed her to tell why nothing was said about their founding prophet during the whole length of the tour. Her reply shocked us! “We are told not to talk about Joseph Smith.” . . . I asked “why?” She replied, “We are sort of embarrassed by him today.” (p. 22)

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1 Steven Crane, the son of Charles Crane, assisted in the preparation of *Ashamed of Joseph* (p. 261) and is listed as one of the authors. But the book is written in the first person singular, presumably by Charles Crane, so for the purpose of this review, the author and Crane will refer to him.
Soon after I began reading *Ashamed of Joseph*, I had the opportunity to visit Temple Square in Salt Lake City in June 1995. With this review in mind, I joined one of the tours that began near a flagpole across from the entrance to the Tabernacle. I believe this would have been the tour in which the author of *Ashamed of Joseph* participated. While some changes may have been made in the tour in the two or more years since Crane visited the temple grounds, I found that some points of Crane's story were verifiable. The tour took us over the grounds of Temple Square and focused on the history of the temple, the purpose of the temple, and the early pioneer's faith in the Lord. A brief mention was also made of Moroni and the Book of Mormon, and, in answer to a few queries, some of the symbols on the temple were explained. No information concerning Joseph Smith was actively volunteered during the course of the tour.

About twenty minutes into the tour, I asked Sister McCombs, one of our guides, why nothing had been said about Joseph Smith. She smiled and told me that Joseph Smith wasn't covered in that tour, but I could learn more about him in the Restoration or Basic Beliefs tour at the North Visitors' Center. The tour ended on the lower floor of the North Visitors' Center in front of a large group of video displays. Sister McCombs demonstrated their use by selecting (purely by coincidence, I'm sure) "Who was Joseph Smith?" After suggesting that we all make use of the video displays, Sister McCombs brought the tour to a close with the reminder that other tours were available inside the Visitors' Center, and she gave directions to the various tours available, including the aforementioned Basic Beliefs tour.

Sister McCombs, who noticed that I had been taking notes during the course of the tour, asked me what the notes were for. I explained that I was reviewing a book. Brother Anderson, the second tour guide, overheard our conversation, rejoined us and asked me about the book I was reviewing. I told them the title of the book and explained that the author of the book said that his Temple Square tour guide had told him that the guides were instructed not to talk about Joseph Smith. I mentioned that the author of *Ashamed of Joseph* said that the reason his tour guide had told him she wasn't supposed to talk about Joseph Smith was because
the Church is embarrassed by Joseph Smith. Brother Anderson exclaimed, "Why, that's absurd!"

After following their suggestion to take the Basic Beliefs tour, I would have to say that I agree with Brother Anderson's assessment of Charles Crane's account of his experience at Temple Square. It's absurd. Crane assumes that if one tour guide says the Church is embarrassed by Joseph Smith, it must indeed be true that the Church is embarrassed by Joseph Smith. And yet a minimum of time and research could have shown him numerous errors in his assumption.

Information on Joseph Smith is readily available on the video displays, which visitors are encouraged to use. The First Vision and Joseph Smith's role as a prophet are covered in the Basic Beliefs tour (which started on the main level of the North Visitors' Center right above the video displays)? Two guides gave me what appeared to be a trained response to questions about Joseph Smith, i.e., "You can learn about him on the Basic Beliefs tour." And the guides on the Basic Beliefs tour (Sister Bevans and Sister Miller) did talk quite readily and easily about Joseph Smith, the prophet and founder of the Latter-day Saint religion.

I've recounted Crane's Temple Square story because it illustrates a problem I found throughout the text of Ashamed of Joseph. Crane does not take the minimum amount of time and research to verify the conclusions and accusations he makes in his book.

Failure to Examine Pertinent Data

One problem Crane has in his book is a tendency to jump to conclusions based on very poor or limited evidence. For instance, Crane resurrects the Solomon Spaulding Manuscript theory of the origin of the Book of Mormon, using as evidence the letters of Henry Lake, John Spaulding, and John N. Miller. These letters claim that the Book of Mormon contains passages and names drawn directly from Solomon Spaulding's Manuscript Found. Had Crane bothered to research his sources more carefully he would have discovered that these letters, collected by Philastus Hurlbut and sold to Eber D. Howe, are believed to have been written in whole, or in part, by Hurlbut himself and are not a true
reflection of the words of any of these men. In addition, there is no evidence to suggest that Joseph Smith or any of his associates ever had access to Spaulding’s manuscript. And finally, the manuscript believed to be the one referenced by the letters failed to live up to the claims of the letters and did not contain names and passages that were identical (or even markedly similar) to those found in the Book of Mormon.  

Crane relies on the report of “one Mormon scholar, whose name I do not recall” (p. 218), to determine whether or not an account of Joseph Smith carrying the golden plates for three miles is believable. According to this unnamed “Mormon scholar,” the golden plates would have weighed 750 pounds. Crane’s argument based on this estimated weight is that Joseph Smith couldn’t have carried 750 pounds three miles while running, jumping, and fighting off attackers. Crane’s failure to research the topic leads him to an invalid argument. Reports from Joseph Smith’s contemporaries who actually lifted the plates suggest that the plates weighed between 40 to 60 pounds. For a strong man, carrying 60 pounds for three miles would be a difficult, but far from impossi-
ble, task. It would be interesting to know how the unnamed "Mormon scholar" managed to reach the figure of 750 pounds for the theoretical weight of the plates. The two estimates I was able to discover for the weight of the plates (if they were made of 24 karat gold)\(^4\) ranged from 123 pounds, suggested by a supporter of the Church, to 200 pounds, suggested by a critic of the Church.\(^5\)

Turning to page 51 of *Ashamed of Joseph*, we find another example of Crane’s tendency to jump to conclusions based on the opinions of others, opinions that are not properly supported by any kind of conclusive evidence. Crane repeats the idea, advanced by Wesley P. Walters, that a court document discovered by Walters is "positive proof . . . that Joseph Smith was involved in money digging and other questionable practices" (p. 51). The author writes, "I know Wesley P. Walters personally and have inserted here a copy of the court document in which Joseph Smith was tried and convicted" (pp. 52–53). Crane apparently would have his readers believe that the document discovered by Walters declares that Joseph Smith was tried and convicted of "money digging and other questionable practices." In point of fact, the document makes no such claim. The document specifies that fees were paid for the examination of an accusation of glass-looking. No mention is made in this document of a conviction or even a trial in the glass-looking case, although some evidence does suggest that a trial might possibly have taken place. At least one study of Walters’s evidence, considered within the context of the legal setting of 1826, concludes that "in 1826 Joseph Smith was indeed

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\(^4\) It has been suggested that the plates were not made of pure gold, but rather a copper/gold alloy. Reed Putnam, “Were the Golden Plates Made of Tumbaga?” *Improvement Era* (September 1966): 788–89, 828–31. The copper/gold alloy theory has also met its share of opposition, as I covered in a previous article in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 166.

charged and tried for being a disorderly person and that he was acquitted."\textsuperscript{6}

**Inconsistent Standards**

Crane also makes numerous statements that indicate his research of the Bible could have been more thorough. A great deal of the book's material is devoted to a comparison of Joseph Smith to Christ and other biblical leaders, yet Crane's comparisons fail to take in a full spectrum of biblical prophets and leaders and ignore many of the actions of those biblical leaders he does mention.

For instance, Crane writes, "I can hardly stomach even one more person comparing Joseph Smith to Jesus Christ, or for that matter to Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or John the Baptist. They were good, honest, nonviolent people" (p. 237). Joseph Smith on the other hand was a "liar, sex fiend, brawler, boaster," and "thief" (p. 176). He was also "not a prophet of God, but a liar, fornicator, impostor and false prophet" (p. 249).

Crane comes to the conclusion that Joseph Smith was a sex fiend and fornicator because he practiced plural marriage (pp. 67–77). By this argument, Abraham and Jacob would also be considered "sex fiends" and "fornicators." Yet God saw fit to bless these two "sex fiends" with visions\textsuperscript{7} and prophetic inspiration.\textsuperscript{8}

Crane believes that Joseph Smith could not be a prophet because the Bible teaches (in 1 Timothy 3:3) that a Church leader is not to be "a brawler" (p. 79). Crane repeats several stories to support the idea that Joseph was a "brawler." The activities reported included wrestling, delivering a blow to another man's head, and using a whip on several men (pp. 79–80). Crane then asks "Was Jesus a brawler? How about Stephen? Paul? Peter?" Given Crane's apparent definition of a brawler, i.e., a person who whipped several men (John 2:13–17), or delivered a blow to a man's head (John 18:10), Christ and Peter, at least, were brawlers.

\textsuperscript{7} For example, Genesis 13:14–17; 31:11; 32:24–30; and 35:9.  
\textsuperscript{8} For example, Genesis 17:1–27; 18:16–33; and 49:1–28.
In addition, Jacob was a brawler for engaging in a wrestling match (Genesis 32:24–30), and Moses was definitely a brawler since he not only fought with, but actually killed, a man (Exodus 2:11–14). By Crane's standards, Christ, Peter, Jacob, and Moses should not have been Church leaders.

Crane calls Joseph Smith a liar many times. For example, "Was this a real encounter with God, or is it possible that Joseph Smith fabricated the whole story?" (p. 64). Crane chooses to doubt the story of the First Vision because, supposedly, no known written account was made of the event until nearly two decades after the vision occurred. Crane says, "If, in truth, Joseph Smith had this memorable experience in 1820, it passed totally unnoticed by all for twenty-two years" (p. 59). In addition, Crane rejects the story of the First Vision because there are different versions of the First Vision story in existence. By Crane's standards, the resurrection of Christ is also a false story since research indicates that the gospel writers did not make the first written records of this momentous event until some twenty years after the resurrection and variances exist in the reports surrounding the occasion.

Crane asks, "Doesn't it speak to Joseph's true nature when we realize that he died because people from within his own ranks rose up in dismay and disgust against him" (p. 249)? Perhaps Crane also feels that Judas's role in the death of Christ indicates that there was something wrong with Christ (Matthew 26:14–25, 47–50). Crane's judgments would, when applied equally to men in the Bible, condemn his own beliefs.

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9 The earliest known written record of the First Vision is believed to have been written in 1832. Paul R. Cheesman, The Keystone of Mormonism: Early Visions of the Prophet Joseph Smith (Provo, UT: Eagle Systems, 1988), 160. However, Crane sets his date from the officially published First Vision account.


11 For example, consider the variances in the four Gospel accounts of the women going to Jesus' empty tomb early in the morning after the resurrection, as recorded in Matthew 28:1, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10, and John 20:1.
Negativism

Crane consistently accepts any and every negative report of Joseph Smith's actions as absolute truth and proof of Joseph's poor character. In no case does Crane indicate that some of the stories about Joseph could be misrepresentations or even lies. In fact, Crane seems to feel that it is a black mark against Joseph that people even said negative things about him. For instance, “Let’s continue with our comparison of Joseph Smith and Jesus Christ. ... Jesus was not depicted as a mischievous young boy who went promenading about the countryside in search of buried treasure. Jesus was never accused of stealing money from the unsuspecting. Jesus was never questioned for having made up an unbelievable story” (pp. 64–65).\(^\text{12}\) Crane gives the impression on one hand that Jesus was never accused of anything of a negative nature, yet admits earlier that, in fact, Christ was accused of many things. “When Jesus stood before Pilate there had been many accusations brought against Him. Some people were saying that He was misleading the nation. Others were claiming that He was refusing to pay taxes to Caesar. Some were calling Him an insurrectionist. Still others called Him a blasphemer” (p. 45). The difference, then, between Joseph Smith and Christ is only a matter of specific accusations, unless one is viewing Mormon history through Crane’s dark-colored glasses.

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\(^{12}\) Jesus, however, did have false stories written about him in which as a child he uses his miraculous powers to perform frivolous feats like making clay birds come to life in order to impress his young friends (1 Infancy 15:2–7, in The Lost Books of the Bible and The Forgotten Book of Eden [New York: World Bible, 1926]), or to fix up poorly made furniture in his father’s carpentry shop, which Joseph then sold (1 Infancy 16:1–16). He supposedly played at being a king and had his followers force others to bow to him (1 Infancy 18:1–4), cursed a boy who knocked him down so that the boy died (1 Infancy 19:22–24), and in a fit of temper caused another boy to wither and die (2 Infancy 2:1–7), and the dead boy’s parents to go blind (2 Infancy 2:11–16). He was accused of accomplishing his miracles by sorcery (Origen, Against Celsus I, 6, in The Ante-Nicene Fathers, ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson, 10 vols. [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1956], vol. 4); he was accused of being an illegitimate son fathered by a Roman soldier named Panthera (ibid., I, 32); and he is accused of learning his miraculous powers from the Egyptians for whom he worked as a poor young child (ibid., I, 28).
Crane continues his policy of viewing all Latter-day Saint history in a negative light in his treatment of the biography by Lucy Mack Smith. Crane claims that Joseph's "mother and father repeatedly had spiritual or occult experiences that seem more fitting for a spiritualist medium than a godly family" (p. 199). What were some of these "occult" experiences cited by Crane? First, the miraculous cure of Lucy's sister, Lovisa. When Lovisa recovers from a lengthy illness, she attributes her recovery to the Lord. Lucy also tells about an illness in which she feared dying and made a covenant with God that if he would let her live, she would endeavor to serve him according to the best of her abilities. After that point, she begins to get better. Again, Lucy attributes her healing to the Lord. Lucy also recounts a dream she had when asking for the Lord's help in getting her husband to believe the gospel, and she tells of a dream given to Joseph Smith, Sr., regarding a special blessing for which he had been chosen. Crane finds these experiences suspect and concludes, "Like her son later, Lucy was going into the woods and praying and having personal revelations from God in answer to her prayers. We should not be surprised that her son Joseph would do similarly later" (p. 200).

One wonders what Crane would have to say of a child raised in an environment in which mother, father, and another relative all claimed to have been visited by an angel. At the point that these visitations occurred, none of the members of this child's family were part of an organized Christian religion. In addition, these family members felt they had been called of God for a special blessing, and not only was an old woman cured of barrenness and an old man struck dumb (surely absurd occurrences in a normal everyday life), but the child's mother, a virgin, believed she would give birth to the Son of God. Would not any miraculous or godly thing experienced by the child of this couple be considered suspect, in Crane's view, since the child would certainly have been reared in an environment with a strong belief in the supernatural?

14 Ibid., 33–34.
15 Ibid., 43–44.
16 Ibid., 64–65.
Contradictions

Crane tells his readers that “We must be careful that our study be for the purpose of building people up, not putting them down” (p. 28). Yet one quickly loses track of the number of times Crane manages to insult members of the Church. For example:

- One page away from his statement to avoid put downs, Crane proclaims, “Our goal must be to share truth in love with the hope that we are able to start a person on the path to clear thinking,” and “When a person starts thinking logically, they are on their way out of Mormonism and are on their way to biblical Christianity” (p. 29).

- “The result (to the more perceptive Mormon) is despair” (p. 17). (So, if you aren’t in despair, you must be imperceptive!) Crane follows up this interesting tidbit by informing us that the suicide rate is disproportionately high among Mormons, and especially among teens in Utah (making teens the most perceptive individuals in Utah?).

It is difficult to understand how Crane can admonish his readers to avoid putting down the members of the Church when he himself puts down Mormons with repeated accusations of negative behavior and with insults.

More Contradictions

Crane’s title thesis is that the Mormon Church is “ashamed of Joseph” and attempting to deemphasize Joseph Smith’s role in the Church (pp. 25, 37, 259). On this subject Crane admits, “It is not suggested that every Mormon feels this way about Joseph Smith nor that this is the official Church position” (p. 37), and again, “I am not suggesting that every Mormon is ashamed of Joseph Smith, or even that this feeling is widespread” (p. 38), yet Crane continually generalizes his statements concerning the

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17 Crane apparently draws his statistics on this point from the same source as The Godmakers, a source which has been shown to be unreliable in Gilbert W. Scharffs, The Truth about "The Godmakers" (Salt Lake City: Publishers, 1989), 40–47, 75, 76.
Church’s feelings about Joseph Smith and writes as if this proposed “embarrassment” is a proven fact.

- “Herein lies the proposition of this book—what has caused the Mormon Church to deemphasize the role of their founder and prophet? Why is the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints ‘ashamed of Joseph’?” (p. 25)?
- “Yes, it is easy to see why the Mormons are ‘ashamed of Joseph’” (p. 65).
- “I wonder what Jesus would think of Joseph Smith’s theatrics? No wonder the Mormons are ‘ashamed of Joseph’” (p. 81).
- “When a person carefully examines the character of Joseph Smith, there is little doubt as to why the Mormon church is ‘ashamed of Joseph’” (p. 102).
- “Are the Mormons ashamed of Joseph Smith? Yes, and well they should be!” (p. 256)

In several other instances, Crane claims that the Mormons, the Mormon Church, the Mormon leaders (p. 37), and even the Mormon apologists (p. 214) are ashamed of Joseph, yet he provides no statistical or even testimonial evidence to back up any of his claims beyond a single statement reported to have been made by an unnamed Temple Square tour guide.

Sensationalism

Crane tells his readers, “It is only an attitude of love that gives us the right to speak with a Mormon neighbor or friend. If love does not shine through this book, then it will do little lasting good” (p. 28). Yet the overall tone of Ashamed of Joseph is far from loving.

For example, eight pages of the book are devoted to gory excerpts from the tabloid-styled biography of Bill Hickman (pp. 88–96).19 We are also treated to a story about an abusive

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18 As a passing note, I was not able to discover whom Crane is quoting when he applies quotation marks to the phrase “ashamed of Joseph” unless he is simply quoting himself.

19 Crane attempts to tie Bill Hickman to Joseph Smith, implying that Hickman’s violence can be blamed on Joseph Smith, even though Joseph Smith never had contact with Hickman.
polygamous husband (pp. 72-76), an account of a foul-mouthed service station attendant who objected to Church proselyting at the Carthage Jail exhibit (pp. 221-22), and a tale about a divorcee from Crane's congregation who joined the Mormon Church and proceeded to sleep with her ward teacher and each of the missionaries (pp. 253-54). In case such stories did not provide his readers with enough titillating material, Crane also informs us that Joseph Smith had "concubines" (p. 246), and "violated" a sixteen-year-old girl (p. 77). Indeed, Crane seems to take an inordinate interest in Joseph Smith's supposedly lustful, womanizing, fiendish sexual proclivities and repeatedly returns to the subject throughout the book (pp. 34, 69, 76-77, 176, 187, 227-28, 237, 246, 249). We also find Crane implying that Satan is responsible for two miraculous occurrences in Church history (pp. 206, 209).

Conclusion

At the beginning of this review, I quoted from Crane's book: "There are so many errors that are readily demonstrated and without a great investment of time and research" (p. 254). It appears to me that the author has followed to precision this stated philosophy and taken very little time, research, or even thought in the preparation of this book. He reassures his readers that they needn't be experts on Mormonism in order to become missionaries to the Mormons. He has, he claims, won converts out of Mormonism "consistently from the very beginning when my knowledge was very inadequate" (p. 255). I would suggest that the author has not come as far as he thinks in his pursuit of expertise on the topic of Mormonism. I hope, if he plans another foray into anti-Mormon publishing, that he will take a few hours to visit a local library, read more than a few paragraphs of a book quoted by another anti-Mormon author, or at the very least climb the stairs of the North Visitors' Center at Temple Square before applying ink to paper.
Mormons Answered Verse by Verse is an attempt to "refute the misuse of the Bible" (p. 13) by the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Written by two evangelical Christians, David Reed and John Farkas, the book reflects their zealous desires to expose the allegedly faulty use of selected biblical passages by Mormons. Mr. Farkas draws his insights from a nine-year membership in the Church, during which time he served as an elders quorum president. Mr. Reed is a former Jehovah's Witness who views Mormonism in a similar light.

This volume contains three general divisions. First, it presents an introduction and three short chapters as a framework for understanding Mormonism. With nothing more than the first two introductory paragraphs, even the casual reader will readily sense the negativism which permeates this paperback. This negative slant continues throughout the introduction and chapter one, both of which examine the historical roots of Mormonism. In chapter two the authors examine the current doctrines (and not so current, i.e., Adam-God theory) of the Latter-day Saints. The third chapter completes the background materials with an overview of Mormon scripture. "Overview," however, might be somewhat euphemistic, as the authors digress quickly into an assault on the Joseph Smith Translation and the authenticity of the Pearl of Great Price.

The second general portion of the book represents the heart of the content. Here, in chapters four through six, the focus turns to a verse-by-verse refutation of the biblical passages Mormons commonly use to support their theology. Chapter four is an attempt by the authors to refute Latter-day Saint interpretation of twenty-one Old Testament passages. Likewise, chapter five treats thirty-four passages from the New Testament with a similar per-
spective. Then, finally, chapter six discards the putative purpose of this volume and attacks Mormon doctrine on its own turf by analyzing fifteen Book of Mormon verses. The third and final section of this piece concludes with two short chapters. The first chapter outlines how to convert Mormons, and the second, chapter eight, tells about the authors personally and their brush with Mormonism.

The larger issue of this review is the question of scholarly impact. Do these two devotees effectively accomplish their task of scripturally refuting Mormonism? The most probable answer is a split decision, dependent more upon the religious predisposition of the reader than the rhetoric or persuasiveness of this book. For critics of Mormonism, the sheer number of scriptural citations, complete with logical barbs and daggers, promises hours of premeditated superiority and quixotic victories. However, for those loyal to Mormonism, these pages will engender a different response.

This book will present precious little substance for the pro-Mormon audience. It basically attacks biblical Mormonism through the worn-out arguments of polytheism, polygamy, and non-Christian theology. For the assault on the Book of Mormon, the authors flog the issues of biblical plagiarism and archaeological anachronisms. Many of their scriptural explanations, both biblical and Book of Mormon, loop rather quickly back into one or another of these issues. Aside from their specific content concerns, the authors will definitely offend their Latter-day Saint sympathizers with their unabashed use of both spurious and specious logic. For one example, consider their answer to the Mormon use of James 1:5 in the New Testament. This verse admonishes mankind to pray for guidance in areas of uncertainty. Reed and Farkas respond, “He (God) does not expect us to ask him questions that we can answer for ourselves ... such as, ‘Should I rob a bank?’ or ‘Is Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs a true story?’ and we cannot expect him to give us personal answers to such questions” (p. 101). Their answer borders on the absurd, if not presumptuous, counsel that intelligent Christian students will read this book and, subsequently, have no need to ask God about the truth of Mormonism. In short, Reed and Farkas elevate their intellectual
conclusions above and beyond personal feedback from God. Such is the reasoning that devout Mormons will find insulting.

Although this book will mostly serve to segregate its readership, are there any positives that this publication might spawn? In all likelihood a smaller segment of non-LDS readers will find in this volume a springboard for deeper introspection concerning their religious convictions. Jesus himself admonished his followers to “search the scriptures” (John 5:39). Possibly a perusal of these cited passages will encourage all serious Christians to consider their theology more thoughtfully. A second beneficiary might also be the committed Latter-day Saint reader. Too often this group has not wrestled sufficiently with attacks like those advanced by Reed and Farkas on the issues of polygamy, polytheism, and supposedly non-Christian theological frameworks. Consequently, this book might engender some thoughtful study from Latter-day Saint readers even with its deeply bipolar orientation.

In a final challenge, the authors encourage their readership to engage Mormons with the help of a four-letter abbreviation, L.P.P.Q. Their explanation: love, politeness, patience, and quality (p. 125). Perhaps the message behind this acronym represents the real contribution of this paperback, by identifying something that both Mormon critics and sympathizers can finally agree upon.

Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

Some months ago, in a telephone conversation, an Atlanta-based Christian radio talk-show personality and anti-“cult” writer by the name of Robert Bowman readily conceded to me that much anti-Mormon writing is of a remarkably low quality. Then he called my attention to Kurt Van Gorden’s *Mormonism* as a splendid exception to that rule. It is, he said, a first-rate piece of work.

Intrigued, I immediately ordered a copy. And I can now report that this brief volume is indeed visually attractive, clear, and well organized. It presents a great deal of material in concise outline form. Unfortunately, crucial portions of that material are wrong. Despite the claim of the editor of the series in which it appears that “the authors in this series are highly qualified, well-respected professional Christian apologists with considerable expertise on their topics,” *Mormonism* is deeply disappointing. In the final analysis, Kurt Van Gorden has merely produced yet another stale anti-Mormon tract.

In this review, I shall very briefly examine only Mr. Van Gorden’s treatment of the Book of Mormon. The quality of his approach to this subject, alas, serves well to represent the quality of the remainder of his little book.

Of course, some of what Mr. Van Gorden has to say is entirely unobjectionable. The Book of Mormon was published in 1830 (p. 10). It is true that Joseph Smith (who was born on 23 December 1805) claimed to have encountered a former inhabitant of the New World, now an angel, named Moroni (p. 8). It is indisputable that “the current text [of the Book of Mormon] is the revised 1981 edition” (p. 23). There were eleven official witnesses to the Book of Mormon (pp. 9–10).

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1 Alan Gomes, in introduction, “How to Use This Book,” 6.
But we hardly need Kurt Van Gorden to tell us such things. Let us examine, instead, a few of the places where he sets out to offer a more critical and controversial view of Mormonism. Does his work pass scrutiny?

- "Recent attempts," declares Mr. Van Gorden, "to authenticate the Book of Mormon through archaeology have failed miserably. Most notable is the work of Thomas Steward [sic] Ferguson, founder of the Archaeology Department at Brigham Young University. His revealing manuscript at the close of his career shows that no coins, cities, people, plants, animals, or languages of the Book of Mormon have ever been discovered" (p. 9, n. 9).

It is revealing that Mr. Van Gorden chooses the late Thomas Stewart Ferguson as his star archaeological witness against the Book of Mormon. And, furthermore, that he inflates Mr. Ferguson's credentials in the process. (Mr. Ferguson was a lawyer, not an archaeologist. He never taught at Brigham Young University, let alone founded the University's department of archaeology.)

Why does Mr. Van Gorden focus on him? Why does he avert his gaze from, say, Professor John L. Sorenson's work on the geography and archaeology of the Book of Mormon? Isn't his

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behavior a bit reminiscent of the wolf, seizing the stragglers of the flock, taking on the weakest of Latter-day Saint arguments while avoiding the strongest ones?

And, by the way, for the umpteenth time, the Book of Mormon never claims that there were "coins" in the ancient New World. The text of the Book of Mormon mentions neither the word coin nor any variant thereof. The reference to "Nephite coinage" in the chapter heading to Alma 11 is not part of the original text and is mistaken. Alma 11 is almost certainly talking about standardized weights of metal—a historical step toward coinage, true, but not yet the real thing.4 (I wonder how many more times we will have to point this out.)

- Mr. Van Gorden informs his readers that "The nonexistence of the Reformed Egyptian hieroglyphics is a problem for Mormon scholars. Yet [sic] they lack any evidence that the Reformed Egyptian ever even existed outside of the mind of Joseph Smith" (p. 8, n. 7).

But Mr. Van Gorden is wrong. "Reformed Egyptian" is not a problem at all for Latter-day Saint scholars. Of course, there is no reason to expect that anything called "reformed Egyptian" would necessarily show up anywhere else in the ancient world, nor that the name "reformed Egyptian" would itself be familiar to non-Mormon scholars, because the Book of Mormon clearly explains that "reformed Egyptian" was the Nephites' own term for a complex of script and language that, at least at the end of nearly a millennium of independent linguistic evolution, was unique to them. On the other hand, we now know something that Joseph Smith could not have known in the 1820s, namely, that ancient Jews did on occasion write their sacred texts in a way that seems to match the Book of Mormon's description of "reformed

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Egyptian.” And such common varieties of Egyptian script as hieratic and demotic could easily and accurately be described as “reformed Egyptian,” if somebody ever cared to do so. The term holds no mystical significance.

- Mr. Van Gorden claims that the Book of Mormon errs and contradicts the Bible in predicting (at Alma 7:10) that Jesus Christ “shall be born of Mary at Jerusalem, which is the land of our forefathers” (p. 25, n. 52).

Once again, though, he is wrong. The Book of Mormon does not say that Jesus would be born in the city of Jerusalem, but, rather, in the land belonging to that city. Thus, there is no contradiction. For, in doing so, the Book of Mormon matches ancient usage in a way that Joseph Smith could almost certainly not have known. Ancient documents do indeed speak of Bethlehem as a town within the confines of “the land of Jerusalem.” Far from being a liability or a defect in the Book of Mormon, Alma 7:10 is striking evidence for the book’s antiquity.

Okay. So Mr. Van Gorden’s knowledge of ancient history and archaeology proves defective. Well, both archaeology and ancient history are difficult and specialized subjects. Ideally, those who pronounce judgments on issues relating to them should have extensive knowledge of a number of ancient languages, or experience with field excavations, or both. At the least, they should have read a great deal. So perhaps we shouldn’t judge Mr. Van Gorden on matters in which very few people would be able to pass the test. Maybe he will fare better on early American Mormon history. It was written (and enacted) in English, and in a culture virtually identical to the one in which he lives. Let’s take a look:

- Mr. Van Gorden cites Professor Charles Anthon’s account—or, more accurately, one of his accounts—of his meeting with Martin Harris (p. 9, n. 11), intending to cast doubt on the story of that meeting that has been canonized in Joseph Smith—

5 For a good, brief summary of the evidence, with references, see William J. Hamblin, “Reformed Egyptian” (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1995).
History 1:63–65. But Mr. Van Gorden doesn’t let his readers know that Anthon’s remarks are highly problematic. He doesn’t tell them that, in fact, scholarly investigations into the situation have shown that Anthon (who, unlike Martin Harris, had considerable reason to adjust the truth) had a difficult time telling the story the same way twice.  

- Mr. Van Gorden implies that David Whitmer admitted, shortly before his death, that his encounter with the plates and the angel (and, presumably, that of his fellow witnesses) was hallucinatory, and informs his readers that Oliver Cowdery denied his testimony of the Book of Mormon (p. 9, n. 12).

But, as is typical of anti-Mormon literature, Mr. Van Gorden ignores a large body of serious scholarly work on the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. He seems to know nothing about the publications of Eldin Ricks (1961), Milton Backman (1983), Rhett James (1983), and especially Richard Lloyd Anderson (1981) and Lyndon Cook (1991). There is simply no substantial evidence that Oliver Cowdery ever denied his testimony, nor any reason to believe that David Whitmer, notwithstanding his long, permanent, and rather bitter disaffection from the Church, thought his experience with the angel and the plates to be a hallucination. Consider a few of David Whitmer’s own late statements on the matter:

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I saw [the plates and other artifacts] just as plain as I see this bed (striking his hand upon the bed beside him), and I heard the voice of the Lord, as distinctly as I ever heard anything in my life, declaring that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and power of God.9

Of course we were in the spirit when we had the view, for no man can behold the face of an angel, except in a spiritual view. But we were in the body also, and everything was as natural to us, as it is at any time.10

After talking as he did, so fully and freely[,] he said "I have been asked if we saw those things with our natural eyes. Of course they were our natural eyes. There is no doubt that our eyes were prepared for the sight, but they were our natural eyes nevertheless."11

Rather suggestively [Colonel Giles] asked if it might not have been possible that he, Mr. Whitmer, had been mistaken and had simply been moved upon by some mental disturbance, or hallucination [sic], which had deceived them into thinking he saw the Personage, the Angel, the plates, the Urim and Thummim, and the sword of Laban.

How well and distinctly I remember the manner in which Elder Whitmer arose and drew himself up to his

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9 Interview with Orson Pratt and Joseph F. Smith (Richmond, Missouri, 7–8 September 1878), reported in a letter to President John Taylor and the Council of the Twelve, dated 17 September 1878. Originally published in the Deseret News, 16 November 1878, and reprinted in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 40.


full height—a little over six feet—and said, in solemn and impressive tones:

“No, sir! I was not under any hallucination, nor was I deceived! I saw with these eyes and I heard with these ears! I know whereof I speak!”12

One of the most accurate tests of the seriousness and quality of any piece of anti-Mormon literature can be carried out simply by examining its treatment, if it deals with them at all, of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. By this standard, though, Mr. Van Gorden’s book fails badly. Perhaps, therefore, one final passage from David Whitmer might profitably be cited here. It was originally written in response to a nineteenth-century Missourian who had misrepresented the elderly witness’s position. But it could just as easily be addressed, today, to Kurt Van Gorden and his associates:

Unto all Nations, Kindred, Tongues and People, unto whom these presents shall come: It having been represented by one John Murphy, of Polo, Caldwell county, Missouri, that I, in a conversation with him last summer, denied my testimony as one of the three witnesses to the “Book of Mormon.”

To the end, therefore, that he may understand me now, if he did not then, and that the world may know the truth, I wish now, standing, as it were, in the very sunset of life, and in the fear of God once for all, to make this public statement:

That I have never at any time denied that testimony, or any part thereof, which has so long since been published with that Book, as one of the three witnesses. Those who know me best, well know that I have always adhered to that testimony. And that no man may be misled or doubt my present views in regard to the same, I do again affirm the truth of all my statements, as then made and published.

12 Interview with Joseph Smith III et al. (Richmond, Missouri, July 1884), originally published in The Saints’ Herald, 28 January 1936, and reprinted in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 134–35 (emphasis in the original).
“He that hath an ear to hear, let him hear,” it was no delusion! What is written is written—and he that readeth let him understand.  

Obviously, Mr. Van Gorden does no better in the American history category than he does in that of ancient history and archaeology. But we must guard against over-hasty judgments. Perhaps he will do better in an area that requires no extensive scholarship, no exhausting research. Surely, living as he does in southern California, surrounded by many tens of thousands of Latter-day Saints, and specializing as he does in approaches to Mormons and Mormonism, he should have an accurate idea of the modern Church and its practices.

- Sadly, it isn't so. Mr. Van Gorden incorrectly informs his readers that The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints barred American Indians from its priesthood until June 1978 (pp. 13, 16).

It is difficult to know where Mr. Van Gorden came up with this mistaken idea, since even so early a text as the Book of Mormon itself clearly portrays the exercise of priesthood functions among peoples included by Latter-day Saints among the ancestors of the modern American Indian. The very title page of the Book of Mormon terms the Lamanites "a remnant of the house of Israel." As such, they are heirs to all of the promised blessings of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, emphatically including the blessings of priesthood (Abraham 1:2; 2:9–11). Accordingly, missions to the Indians began in the very first year of the modern existence of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. And the success of those missions has been considerable. Hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children of American Indian background have joined the Church in North, Central, and South America. People of American Indian descent have served at every level of Church leadership, and this was just as true before 1978 as it has been since.  

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13 "A Proclamation," appended to an interview with a correspondent of the Chicago Times (Richmond, Missouri, 14 October 1881), originally published in Chicago Times, 17 October 1881, and reprinted in Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 79.

14 At several points in Mr. Van Gorden's book, informed readers will ask
ing of the Church that American Indians have been barred from its priesthood.

Regrettably, Kurt Van Gorden's *Mormonism* fails in its application of ancient history and archaeology to the Book of Mormon. It fails in its analysis of early Latter-day Saint history and the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. And it fails even in its understanding of modern Mormonism and of the place of Book of Mormon peoples within it. This last fact is especially puzzling, since a quest for accuracy in this area would have entailed no wearisome field work, no difficult study of foreign languages, no troublesome research in books and academic journals, no lengthy travel. California is dotted with hundreds of Latter-day Saint chapels, and with thousands of members and missionaries who (much to the disgust of people like Mr. Van Gorden) are more than willing to explain their beliefs to anybody even slightly inclined to listen.

That Kurt Van Gorden's *Mormonism* has been acclaimed as an exemplary specimen of anti-Mormon writing says a great deal about the generally dismal quality of its competition. Until conservative Protestant critics of the Church come to grips with the real evidence and arguments for the truth of the Restoration and the prophetic claims of Joseph Smith, they will deserve no more than the summary dismissal that almost all Latter-day Saints instinctively—and quite correctly—give to them.

themselves how much he really knows about contemporary Mormonism. His repeated references to “the Melchizedekian [sic] priesthood,” for instance, suggest, at the least, a tin ear when it comes to Latter-day Saint terminology (see p. 10). And on p. 20, he thinks there is still a “First Council of the Seventy,” although it was abolished in October 1976.
Christ-Bearer

And I looked and beheld a man among the Gentiles, who was separated from the seed of my brethren by the many waters; and I beheld the Spirit of God, that it came down and wrought upon the man; and he went forth upon the many waters, even unto the seed of my brethren, who were in the promised land. (1 Nephi 13:12)

Some months ago, while my family and I sat around the dinner table, the name of Christopher Columbus came up. Instantly, my thirteen-year-old son volunteered the judgment that Columbus wasn’t really much of a hero, that he was, in fact, the villain behind the extermination of millions of native Americans and the indirect cause of the pollution of the air, water, and soil of the New World.

I can only assume that my son had absorbed this ideological-tripe-masquerading-as-history at our local junior high school, or else, perhaps, during the Columbus Quincentennial of 1992 at his elementary school. Unfortunately, such disinformation is common nowadays, though I confess I had not previously thought it such a problem in the public schools of Utah.

I immediately recommended Arnold Garr’s book, Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective, to my son. While Columbus’s life was not entirely saintly, and while aspects of his legacy certainly call for reflection and even regret, on balance he
is a remarkable historical figure whose persistence, courage, skillfulness, and spiritual sensitivity are fully deserving of admiration.

Latter-day Saints, of course, have special reason for paying attention to the career of the great "Admiral of the Ocean Sea." Since the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830, it has been virtually universally recognized that 1 Nephi 13:12, quoted as the epigram to this review, refers to Columbus, who thus emerges from the very pages of scripture itself as an important, foreordained actor in the divine plan.

Skeptical readers of the Book of Mormon, to the extent that they have noticed the passage at all, have dismissed it as a cheap and easy instance of prophecy *ex eventu*, written by Joseph Smith (or Sidney Rigdon, or Ethan Smith, or Solomon Spaulding, or whomever) long after Columbus’s career, but postdated, as it were, in order to create a seemingly impressive and self-validating prediction by an ancient prophetic writer. At the very most, some have said, the "prophecy" of Columbus hardly constitutes evidence for the antiquity or inspiration of the Book of Mormon.

On a surface level, such critics are right. It would have taken little talent in the late 1820s for someone to prophesy the discovery of America nearly three and a half centuries earlier. But the description of Columbus provided by 1 Nephi 13:12 remains, in my view, a remarkable demonstration of the revelatory accuracy of the Book of Mormon, and Professor Garr’s book clearly sets out the reasons.

It is only with the growth of Columbus scholarship in recent years, and particularly with the translation and publication of Columbus’s *Libro de las profecías* in 1991, that English-speaking readers have been fully able to see how remarkably Columbus’s own self-understanding parallels the portrait of him given by the Book of Mormon. Professor Garr’s *Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective* uses the resources provided by modern scholarship to provide a well-informed and genuinely Mormon view of the great explorer.

Professor Garr, who teaches in the Department of Church History and Doctrine at Brigham Young University, sets out quite explicitly (see p. xiii) to emphasize seven themes relating to Columbus: (1) His discovery of the New World for Europe fulfilled Book of Mormon prophecy. (2) He served as a forerunner
to the Restoration. (3) The primary motivation for his exploration was not financial gain, but the spread of Christianity. (4) He was guided by the Spirit of God, most especially on his first voyage to the Americas. (5) He himself believed that he was guided by the Spirit. (6) He regarded many of his achievements as a fulfillment of biblical and other prophecy. (7) Many modern prophets and apostles have held Columbus in great respect. In the course of his discussion, the author sets out a clear summary of Columbus’s life and career. In this review, I shall highlight a few of the points I found most interesting.

The admiral’s son Ferdinand was convinced, as, apparently, was the explorer himself, that the name Christopher Columbus (Italian Cristoforo Colombo) carried significant and divine meaning (see the discussion on pp. 8–10). Columbus means “dove,” and Ferdinand was not hesitant to link it with the dove that symbolized the Holy Ghost at the Savior’s baptism by John. Even more remarkably, perhaps, Christopher signifies “Christ-bearer,” a perfectly appropriate title for the role that Columbus saw himself as playing, and that history did, in fact, assign to him as he opened up the New World for Christian evangelization. The great priest and historian Bartolome de Las Casas (cited on p. 13) said of Columbus that “He was extraordinarily zealous for the divine service; he desired and was eager for the conversion of [the Indians], and that in every region the faith of Jesus Christ be planted and enhanced.” Indeed, based on his feeling that he was living in the last days, Columbus felt a considerable sense of urgency about taking the gospel to all nations, kindreds, tongues, and peoples before the end of the world (p. 31). Writing to Amerigo Vespuci, the Italian explorer for whom (rather unjustly) the Americas would eventually be named, Columbus himself remarked,

1 Along the way, he aims well-deserved criticism at the persistent myth that the scholars of Columbus’s time thought the earth was flat (p. 28) and tells of the astonishing reception that the Indians gave to Columbus and his white, bearded shipmates, a reception perhaps to be connected with legends of Christ’s appearance in ancient America (pp. 47–48).

2 I am inclined to agree with Professor Garr (on p. 56) that Columbus also played an important part in the fulfillment of 1 Nephi 13:38.

3 In keeping with his deep beliefs, Columbus tended to give religious names—such as San Salvador (“Holy Savior”), La Navidad (“Christmas”), and Trinidad (“Trinity”)—to the places he came across (see pp. 46, 61).
I feel persuaded, by the many and wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence in my especial favour, that I am the chosen instrument of God in bringing to pass a great event—no less than the conversion of millions who are now existing in the darkness of Paganism. (cited on pp. 30, 82)

It is difficult, indeed, to argue with Columbus’s perception of “many and wonderful manifestations of Divine Providence in [his] especial favour.” Students of his first transoceanic voyage, in particular, have been struck by the fact that Columbus made not a single wrong navigational move during the entire journey (p. 39). For instance, despite the fact that the Azores were the westernmost Atlantic islands known in Columbus’s day, and, consequently, the logical point of departure for a westward voyage, Columbus opted to launch his expedition rather from the Canary Islands, off the coast of Africa and considerably to the southeast. In doing so, he caught the tradewinds that blow from the northeast to the southwest and he avoided the headwinds that blow from west to east in the area of the Azores. Indeed, five centuries of sailing have proven Columbus’s route to be the best possible course for a voyage from southern Europe to North America (p. 41). Miraculous sea changes and a pair of fateful (and, in at least one case, rationally inexplicable) course corrections (discussed on pp. 43–44) also seem to bear the mark of divine intervention on Columbus’s behalf. Finally, returning from that important initial voyage, and on the basis of (obviously) no prior transatlantic sailing experience, either his own or anybody else’s, Columbus discovered the optimal return route to southern Europe, this time via the Azores (p. 50).

Referring to his first crossing of the Atlantic, Columbus declared that, “With a hand that could be felt, the Lord opened my mind to the fact that it would be possible to sail from here to

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4 Professor Garr calls attention (on p. 3) to Orson Hyde’s intriguing notion that it was Moroni, acting in a stewardship role for the Americas, who guided and gave impressions to Columbus; see JD 6:368.

5 As we shall see below, the author feels that Columbus was “wrought upon” by the Spirit of God on other occasions besides his first voyage to the Americas. One incident to which he alludes is Columbus's remarkable escape from a shipwreck relatively early in his seafaring career (see p. 20).
the Indies, and he opened my will to desire to accomplish the project. . . . This was the fire that burned within me. . . . Who can doubt that this fire was not merely mine, but also of the Holy Spirit?” (cited on pp. 3, 19, 39, 41, 81). “Our Lord,” he said in 1500, “made me the messenger of the new heaven and the new earth, . . . and he showed me the place where to find it” (cited on pp. 52, 83).

Columbus was a serious and close student of the Bible. Latter-day Saints will be interested to learn (on pp. 31, 65) that John 10:16, a verse with which they too are more than a little familiar, was one of Columbus’s favorite passages of scripture: “And other sheep I have that are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold and one shepherd” (as cited on p. 31). This verse provided significant support for his image of himself as a bearer of the gospel to the New World. And, though he was unacquainted with the writings of Nephi, Columbus was convinced that his role had been predicted by ancient prophets:

The Lord purposed that there should be something clearly miraculous in this matter of the voyage to the Indies. . . . I spent seven years here in your royal court discussing this subject with the leading persons in all learned arts, and their conclusion was that it was vain. That was the end, and they gave it up. But afterwards it all turned out just as our redeemer Jesus Christ had said, and as he had spoken earlier by the mouth of his holy prophets. (cited on pp. 29, 65, 82)

“I pointed out that for the execution of the journey to the Indies I was not aided by intelligence, by mathematics or by maps. It was simply the fulfillment of what Isaiah had prophesied” (cited on pp. 63, 65, 82).

As mentioned earlier, the quite recent publication of Columbus’s Book of Prophecies in English translation now permits us a window into his soul. And what we see therein cannot fail to remind Latter-day Saint readers of the Book of Mormon. Columbus was fascinated by such themes as the recovery of the Holy Land and the rebuilding, there, of the ancient Jewish temple (p. 64). One of his favorite scriptures, in this regard, was Isaiah
2:2, which Latter-day Saints will surely recognize: “And in the last days the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be prepared on the top of the mountains, and it shall be exalted above the hills: and all nations shall flow unto it” (as cited on p. 64). He was also, as mentioned, totally committed to the notion that the gospel had to be preached to the ends of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof brought to Christ, before the end of the world (pp. 64–65). For much of this, just as readers of the Book of Mormon might have guessed, Columbus’s favorite author was the prophet Isaiah. Indeed, it was in that prophet’s book that Columbus thought he could see himself and his voyages divinely foretold. Among the passages that caught his attention were Isaiah 42:1–4: “Behold my servant: I will uphold him. My elect: My soul [de]lighteth in him. I have given my spirit upon him. . . . and the islands shall wait for his law” (as cited on p. 66), and Isaiah 55:5.

For all of its (justifiable) enthusiasm for the great explorer, Professor Garr’s book is not blind to Columbus’s faults. During his second voyage to the New World, for instance, Columbus, who was under intense pressure to justify the large amounts of money that had gone to support his expeditions—and who was unable to provide gold in the unrealistic amounts that his backers expected—authorized the drafting of native Americans for forced labor and slave sales.6 “This,” says Professor Garr, “was one of the worst decisions Columbus made in his entire life” (p. 59). But it was also a pivotal turning point in his career. The author, who writes quite openly as a faithful Latter-day Saint, and not merely as a purportedly value-neutral historian, notes that,

There is very little evidence in the following few years that [Columbus] received the same kind of divine guidance and inspiration that he had been so blessed with earlier in his life. During the years he served as governor he appeared to be walking by his own light and stumbled along the way. He made several unfortunate decisions and almost everything seemed to go wrong for him. Modern-day revelation teaches that “the

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6 Although it is only a weak defense, we should note—against contemporary Columbus-despisers—that the admiral was merely going along with the prevailing practices of his day.
heavens withdraw themselves” when men “exercise unrighteous dominion” over others (D&C 121:37, 39).
(p. 60)

In fact, Columbus returned from his third voyage to the New World not only unsuccessful, but humiliated, under arrest, and in shackles (pp. 61–63). Nevertheless, it would appear that the Lord had not abandoned him utterly. During a very difficult and distressing period on his fourth and last voyage to the Americas, Columbus lay down aboard his ship, the Capitana, off the coast of Panama.

I fell asleep, and heard a compassionate voice, saying, “O fool, and slow to believe and serve thy God, the God of every man! What more did He do for Moses or for David His servant than for thee? From thy birth He hath ever held thee in special charge. When He saw thee at man’s estate, marvelously did He cause thy name to resound over the earth. The Indies, so rich a portion of the world, He gave thee for thine own, and thou hast divided them as it pleased thee. Of those barriers of the Ocean Sea, which were closed with such mighty chains, He hath given thee the keys. Thou was [sic] obeyed in so many lands, and thou hast [sic] won noble fame from Christendom. What more did He do for the people of Israel, when He carried them out of Egypt; or for David, whom from a shepherd He raised to be king over Judea? Turn thou to Him and acknowledge thy faults; His mercy is infinite;” . . . I heard all this as in a swoon, but I had no answer to give in definite words; so true, only to weep for my transgression. (cited on p. 83; cf. p. 68)

When, on 20 May 1506, Columbus breathed his last in Valladolid, Spain, his final words were in manus tuas, Domine, commendo spiritum meum (“into thy hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit”) (p. 69). And it seems that his deathbed prayer was heard. On 21 August 1877, under inspiration, President Wilford Woodruff received vicarious baptism for Columbus in the St.
George Temple. Three days later, Columbus was vicariously endowed and ordained a high priest in the same temple.

Latter-day Saints, of all people, should not join in the campaign, currently fashionable in some quarters, to denigrate the illustrious Genoese admiral and explorer. The historical record joins with the Book of Mormon to testify that Christopher Columbus, despite his faults, was a chosen and anointed instrument in the hands of God to bring about the divine purpose for the New World. Arnold K. Garr's *Christopher Columbus: A Latter-day Saint Perspective* sets out the evidence for this proposition clearly and concisely. It is a credit both to the author and to the Religious Studies Center, which published it.

Reviewed by V. Garth Norman

This publication by the Zarahemla Foundation (ZF, not to be confused with the Zarahemla Research Foundation), with Michael M. Hobby as director and principal author, purports to enlighten Book of Mormon students by revealing startling discoveries on the realities of Book of Mormon geography and history. ZF has adopted the theory that Panama correlates with the “narrow neck of land” as the foundation of its research. Unfortunately, this bias results in erroneous assumptions and conclusions as ZF attempts to recast southern Mesoamerica as the Jaredite land northward, although most researchers see southern Mesoamerica as the probable land southward.

The introduction sets forth a claimed “new discovery,” termed angular chronology, as a breakthrough in pre-Columbian dating. Angular chronology is based upon the discovery of a change in the cardinal directions that supposedly occurred during the period in which such ancient American civilizations as the Hopewell mound builders of North America and the Preclassic Maya of Mesoamerica were at their zenith. It divides all of pre-Columbian time into two highly resolved chronological periods, separated by a great discontinuity.

It is not necessary to argue whether the cardinal-shift hypothesis is plausible. One must rely on archaeological and archaeoastronomical studies to determine if the Mesoamerican site-planning shift actually occurred. The underlying drive of this study is to find a southern Mesoamerican chronology that would fit a Jaredite land northward, north of Panama, in Central America. The authors claim “a profusion of evidence for which the skeptic will have great difficulty providing alternative explanations” (front matter), and, acting as devil’s advocates, they could find none.
They claim that professors and colleagues (unnamed) who were invited to review their work were without exception overwhelmed by the weight of evidence supporting it. This claim is surprising, and without any references to actual Mesoamerican anthropologists, is not to be taken seriously in light of the fact that the claimed discoveries counter well-known facts within Mesoamerican anthropology.

The authors presume (1) that Mesoamerican sites were planned according to the cardinal directions and (2) that a widespread cardinal shift in Preclassic Mesoamerican sites occurred at around 1000–600 B.C. Presumed catastrophic forces from the shift supposedly altered the Carbon 14 deterioration rate, throwing the C14 readings forward. Therefore, the temple center of Izapa would have been built prior to 700 B.C, rather than around 300–200 B.C. But the authors’ biased collection of data to prove a preconceived notion is fallacious.

One basic problem with the cardinal-shift hypothesis is that the site orientations are not identical. They vary over a range of about six degrees. If sites had been aligned to the cardinal directions based upon the Polaris hub or the equinoxes, they should all be the same, although we might allow for a few degrees of error. However, the only solid test of the cardinal-shift hypothesis is to look at the site-planning data.

The ruins of Teotihuacan and Izapa are cited as primary evidence for a cardinal shift with a central axis skewed about twenty degrees east of north. Had the authors examined the paper “Izapa: An Introduction,” they would have known about a primary winter solstice sunrise orientation of the Izapa site plan. They would also have been introduced to my master’s thesis, “Astronomical Orientations of Izapa Sculptures.”

In my thesis, I show Izapa to be a carefully constructed, Late Preclassic, temple astronomical observatory. The temple site was originally located where it would align directly on the Tajumulco

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volcanic peak with the summer solstice sunrise, as observed from the mountain peak. When viewed from Izapa, the sunrise angle projects from directly below the peak on a horizontal azimuth. This is so precise that Izapa must have been located for this astronomical alignment by the original settlers at Izapa in the fourteenth century B.C. Architectural structures and monuments built at Izapa around the third century B.C align with horizon sunrises for the solstices, equinox, zenith, and also Venus and moon cyclic extremes to create a grand observatory site plan. The three major northern mounds have an astronomical alignment scheme shown to be identical to a monuments plaza scheme (see fig.), which confirms that the astronomical plan in the original construction period of the mounds preceded or was at least contemporary with the monuments plan.

I observe in my thesis that the twenty-degree shift at Izapa accommodates an alignment system for the full range of visible astronomical cyclic standstills on the eastern horizon within the rectangular plaza structure. Thus this astronomical basis is a logical explanation for the origin of the widespread shift in the site-planning tradition throughout Mesoamerica. Izapa’s astronomical site-plan orientations, from at least 1300 B.C to the major constructions around 300-200 B.C. that are still visible, refute the cardinal-shift hypothesis.

Teotihuacan provided the original “inspiration” for the ZF cardinal-shift hypothesis. The authors are unaware, however, that Teotihuacan’s skewed axis is also astronomically fixed. During personal archaeoastronomy field work at Teotihuacan in the late 1970s, I witnessed that the Pyramid of the Moon on the north end of the central axis was positioned for calendar ritual function where the summer solstice sunset could be observed over a prominent mountain peak to the northwest. I also found that the diagonal azimuths of the pyramids align with the solstices.

The pyramid of Cholula, dating to the Late Preclassic in its inner structure, is oriented on its central axis to the summer solstice sunset over the Ixtacciuatl mountain peak.

Many major Preclassic sites were ignored by the authors in testing their cardinal-shift hypothesis. They seem unaware that some sites in the early period of Mesoamerican civilization, which
Figure. Astronomical alignments at Izapa Temple Center, Mexico.  
*Top:* Three western mounds to three northern mounds of central complex.  
*Bottom:* Group B monuments.  
Adapted from Norman, "Astronomical Orientations of Izapa Sculptures."
definitely would have been affected by the cardinal-shift hypothesis, are oriented to the cardinal directions. The central axis of the famous site of Monte Alban is due north. While the visible site is Classic period architecture that fits the shift argument, inner structures on the same axis date back to the Preclassic. The central axis of a well-known major Preclassic Olmec (Jaredite period) site on the Gulf Coast at San Lorenzo also aligns to the cardinal directions. It is not necessary to cite more archaeoastronomy data. The alleged cardinal shift did not occur as the authors claim.

The presumed catastrophic-shift effect that might have altered C14 dates backward by about 500 years did not happen either. Cross-dating tree-ring testing of C14 dates, in which the tree grows a new ring every year, has been extended back to about 6000 B.C. with the bristlecone pine.

The date-shift idea is also difficult to reconcile with Mesoamerican calendar dates. Astronomical testing of the Goodman-Thompson-Martinez correlation of the Maya calendar has in recent years confirmed that lunar conjunction dates engraved on many Maya monuments conform to the actual events. The Maya calendar was eventually deciphered by correlating calendar glyphs recorded by Maya priests after Spanish contact with the Gregorian calendar, and then reading backwards to find the correct period of the 400-year bactun cycles in the early Maya inscription dates.

A few cycle 7 bactun dates on Izapan style sculptures in southern Mesoamerica go back to the Late Preclassic B.C. I have deciphered one Calendar Round date of 1 Imix 4 Pop on Izapa Stela 12, through its calendar position plaza orientation to the autumn equinox, as September 20, 176 B.C. The date is in the Maya Calendar Round, based upon cross-dating from the Izapa excavation that includes C14 dates. This date is attached to a distance or base date number—a common part of Maya inscriptions—that is located in the Stela 12 base panel and goes back 421 years to the presumed start of the Izapa dynasty in 597 B.C. The exact base date depends on whether the Maya Vague Year of 365 days without leap-year adjustment was intended, or whether the actual tropical year from equinox to equinox was used.3

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3 V. Garth Norman, unpublished manuscript.
My point in sharing this calendar data is to illustrate that Mesoamerican history is being pushed back by means of dated sculpture that is consistent with the Maya calendar. If any historic Book of Mormon connections are to be found in Mesoamerica, they will emerge from accumulating hard data through established Mesoamerican scholarly disciplines, not by taking wild leaps that wrench Mesoamerican civilization completely out of its sockets in order to reconcile it with a particular Book of Mormon geographical scheme.4

An irony in this study is that the facts demonstrate the opposite of what the authors had intended—that southern Mesoamerica, not South America as the authors believe, is the probable land southward of the Book of Mormon. Any Book of Mormon student who clings to the notion that Panama is the "narrow neck of land" must also reconcile that notion with the Prophet Joseph Smith's search for Book of Mormon lands in Central America that led him finally to conclude, in a series of editorials in the Times and Seasons in 1842, that the Nephite capital of Zarahemla was located in Central America, not South America. That conclusion did not jibe with earlier or later statements of Church leaders, not because the Prophet was wrong, or because he was not responsible for the statements, but because no evidence of direct revelation on the subject exists. Joseph Smith was apparently searching for the truth in history like every other "inspired" individual should do, by diligent study and by faith (D&C 88:78–79; 109:7).

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4 For additional discussion on the calendar problem, see Bruce W. Warren's review of Angular Chronology in this issue, pages 118–21.

Reviewed by Bruce W. Warren

This is a curious publication. Its chronological thesis is misleading and unnecessary for dealing with Mesoamerican archaeology and history, or the archaeology of any part of ancient America.

Let me illustrate my point by quoting from the book: “At Xochicalco is the famous Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl [Figure 41]. This structure is most remarkable, and has long puzzled scholars. A great conference was held between representatives of the Eastern and Western Jaredites at Xochicalco. The Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl commemorates that event” (p. 54, 58). More accurately, we are supposed to believe that the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl at Xochicalco dates back to Jaredite times, i.e., to long before the time of Christ. The authors feel that since most Mesoamerican scholars date this structure in the ninth or tenth centuries A.D., and not back to Jaredite times, something is drastically wrong with the dating techniques used by the scholars. Thus they see the need for their new dating technique, as proposed in *Angular Chronology*.

In this review I will focus only on the dating of the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl and associated monuments at Xochicalco, with cross ties to other documents from ancient Mexico. The table presents most of the pertinent information for dating, but I shall highlight here only a few bits of information that are keys to dating the Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl at Xochicalco.

The first major concern is the royal genealogies of the Mixtec people of central and southern Mexico. One of the archaeological monuments found at Xochicalco is the Piedra del Palacio. This monument depicts seven actors and has one calendar round date of 3 Rabbit 2 Quake in the Mixtec Yacunudahui calendar, which was used at this site prior to about 1000 A.D. Five of the seven
actors are found in a few Mixtec codices or painted books. These five actors represent a grandfather (male Four Rabbit), his son (male Twelve Iguana), and three grandsons of the grandfather (male Four House, Three Monkey, and Ten Eagle). If one examines royal Mixtec genealogies beginning in the late sixteenth century A.D., one discovers that twenty generations takes one back to the grandfather of this scene. Twenty generations cover approximately 500–600 years. In other words, they date to around 1000 A.D. and not to approximately 1000 B.C., which would be necessary to fit into a Jaredite historical context.

Of the twenty-six actors found on the Xochicalco monuments, eighteen can be cross-referenced to non-Xochicalco sources. The Xochicalco monuments have eleven calendar dates, all between 978–1046 A.D.

I fail to see how anyone can date the Xochicalco Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl back into Jaredite times. The authors of this publication obviously did not check the royal dynastic genealogies relating to Xochicalco and surrounding areas.

Table: Xochicalco Data
(Xochitepec/Sweatbath)

1. **Pyramid of Quetzalcoatl**
   Date(s): 9 House 10 Monkey, Saturday, 21 July 1021 A.D.,
   10.09.14.02.11 10 Chuen 14 Keh (Tilantongo calendar).
   Actors: forty-four+ including males Nine Wind, Three Reed,
   Thirteen Rabbit, and female Six Reed.
   Cross ties: Nuttall 5-III, 66-I, 66-III.

2. **Piedra del Palacio**
   Date(s): 3 Rabbit 2 Quake, Wednesday, 30 September 978 A.D.,
   10.09.10.12.17 2 Kaban 15 Muwan (Yucunudahui calendar).
   Actors: Males Seven Sun (Chicontonatiuh), Four Rabbit, Twelve
   Iguana Hill Woman. Four House, Three Monkey, Ten Eagle,
   and Six Feet (Dog).
   Cross ties: Nuttall 9-II, III, 20-III, 22; Vienna III-1,2; Baranda I;
   Bodley 3-I, II, III; 4-II, III, V; 29-III, 34-I; 35; 36-IV; and
   Anales of Cuauhtitlan paragraphs 6, 10, 18.
3. **Stela 1**

Date(s): 9 House 6 Quake, either Friday, 9 March 1021 A.D., 10.09.13.13.17 6 Kaban 0 Xul or Saturday, 24 November 1021 A.D., 10.09.14.08.17 6 Kaban 0 Wayeb. 13 Rabbit 5 Reed, Friday 3 August 1038 A.D., 10.10.11.07.13 5 Ben 11 Mak. 13 Rabbit 4 House, Thursday 1 November 1038 A.D., 10.10.11.12.03 4 Akbal 1 Kumk’u (all dates in Tilantongo calendar).

Actors: Males Seven Wind, Four Caiman, Nine Rabbit, Five Reed, and Seven Rabbit (Seven Rabbit came from Tula, Hidalgo, and conquered Xochitepec/Xochicalco).

Cross ties: *Lienzo de Xochitepec, Anales of Cuauhtitlan* paragraph 11, and *Nuttall* 21-II.

4. **Stela 3**

Date(s): 2 Reed 2 Reed, Wednesday, 1 August 1027 A.D., 10.10.00.04.13 2 Ben 6 Mac (New Year: Tilantongo calendar, see same date in *Nuttall* 5c). 9 House 12 Reed, 10.09.14.02.13 12 Ben 16 Keh. *Nuttall* 5b has the date of 9 House 1 Eagle, which is two days later.

Actors: Males Four Quake, Four Caiman, Ten Reed, Thirteen Reed, Five Dog (feet), Three Reed, and female Nine Monkey. Five Dog’s son, One Iguana, is the first Lord of Tula, Hidalgo in the Early Postclassic.

Cross ties: *Bodley* 11-V and *Nuttall* 3-I, 4-III, 6-III, 9-II, III, 10-I, II.

5. **Stela 2**

Date(s): 7 House 13 Reed, Friday, 14 November 1045 A.D., 10.10.18.14.13 13 Ben 16 Kumk’u. 7 House 8 Reed, Tuesday, 13 January 1046 A.D., 10.10.18.17.13 8 Ben 11 Sip (both dates in the Tilantongo calendar).

Actors: Males Seven Rain, Nine Flint, Thirteen Flint, Eight Reed, Six Flint (son of Four Quake of Xochitepec), and female Two Death.

Cross ties: *Bodley* 11-V and *Mapa de Xochitepec*.

6. **New Fire Relief Rock**

Date(s): 1 Rabbit 2 Deer, Sunday, 25 November 1038 A.D., 10.10.11.13.07 2 Manik 0 Pop (New Year of Tikal calendar).
First New Fire and associated with the Pleiades at the zenith of the sky. This date is in the Aztec calendar which probably originated Tuesday 31 May 1036 A.D., 10.10.09.03.19 4 Kawak 7 Yax.

Actors: None on the relief.
Cross ties: The Mixcoatl legend.

Reviewed by Gary F. Novak

"The Most Convenient Form of Error": Dale Morgan on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon

We are only critical about the things we don’t want to believe.¹

Dale L. Morgan

Maybe there was an Angel Moroni, and you [Fawn B.] and I are the merest sophists and rationalists unable to see plain facts before our eyes.²

Dale L. Morgan

I first heard of Dale Lowell Morgan in the spring of 1980. The previous fall, Louis Midgley had published "The Brodie

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¹ Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, 28 April 1947, Fawn McKay Brodie Papers, MS 360, bx 7, fld 9, p. 2, Manuscripts Division, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City.

² Dale L. Morgan to Fawn M. Brodie, 29 September 1945, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 6, p. 1. Morgan had an ironic view of Mormon history. There is no reason to think that he took the possibility of angels delivering books seriously.
Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith," in which he reported what many of the Jefferson experts had to say in the seventies about Fawn M. Brodie’s *Thomas Jefferson: An Intimate Biography* and then noted that many of their criticisms were very similar to what Mormons, especially Hugh Nibley, had been saying in the forties about her *No Man Knows My History*. Kent L. Walgren had written to Louis Midgley to complain that “The

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5 In the “Editor’s Acknowledgments,” Kent L. Walgren is credited with having alerted John Phillip Walker to the existence of Morgan’s unfinished Mormon history in the Madeline Reeder McQuown papers at the University of Utah (p. vii). In addition, Walgren has published “Photography as History,” review of *Through Camera Eyes*, by Nelson B. Wadsworth, *Dialogue* 10/3 (Spring 1977): 116–17; “Fast and Loose Freemasonry,” review of *Mormonism and Freemasonry: The Illinois Lodge*, by Mervin B. Hogan, *Dialogue* 18/3 (Fall 1985): 172–76; and “Some Sentimental Thoughts on Leaving the Fold,” *Dialogue* 13/4 (Winter 1980): 75–80. It is interesting to note that Walgren was probably working on this article at the same time he was spewing venom at Louis Midgley. Walgren explains that he went through a series of “spiritual struggle[s]” which caused him to leave the Church. First he saw “hypocritical zone leaders” during his mission, second he “felt battered” after he heard a professor attack some silly student opinions on the Constitution, and finally he felt “insecure” after discovering that “there were numerous versions of the First Vision which seemed to contradict each other.” Walgren, “Some Sentimental Thoughts,” 76–77. He goes on to explain that he “discovered the amiability of coffee, beer and wine” and “came to perceive” people like Eugene England, Richard Poll, Klaus Hansen, and Richard Bushman “as a coterie of intellectual chickens.” Walgren, “Some Sentimental Thoughts,” 79. It is no wonder that he felt challenged when Midgley went after Brodie, who apparently—following
Brodie Connection” “should be required reading for students of the non sequitur: If scholars can find problems with Thomas Jefferson, there must also be serious problems with No Man.” Walgren indicated that he thought “No Man has remained impenetrable all these years not so much because of Ms. Brodie’s genius as because she had available to her a resource more valuable than any library in the world: Dale Morgan.” Although Walgren claimed that Morgan helped Brodie by providing source material and by reading her manuscript, he did not demonstrate how that sort of help made her book “impenetrable.”

Midgley saw the humor and the challenge of Walgren’s attack on his article. He began his reply by noting the problem with the “Morgan-saves-Brodie-from-Brodie-like-stupidity-in-her-first-book thesis.” “It is odd,” Midgley noted, “that the greatest ‘Mormon historian’ never published anything and completed drafts of only four chapters of a book he promised for most of his adult life.” “Does the fact that she had help or that she corresponded with people insure her infallibility? It is interesting to see the theory of an infallible Morgan appear when Brodie’s errors begin to be made public.” It seemed entirely improbable that Brodie’s receiving help from Morgan would somehow save her Joseph Smith book from the Thomas Jefferson critics.

Walgren replied angrily to Midgley. To bolster his opinion that Morgan was “the best historian Mormonism has produced,” Walgren referred Midgley to several of Morgan’s bibliographies, Morgan’s typescript of early newspaper articles on Mormonism, and a couple of biographies of what may be described as Old West figures. Walgren also referred Midgley to Morgan’s unpublished papers in the Marriott Library at the University of Utah. All of this seemed intended to support Walgren’s claims about Morgan’s reputation, and perhaps, thereby, also Brodie’s.

Walgren’s chicken metaphor—was for him something of an intellectual wolf. For his discussion of how he “felt” the Book of Mormon “crumble” after reading No Man Knows, see Walgren, “Some Sentimental Thoughts,” 77.

6 Kent L. Walgren to Louis Midgley, 6 March 1980; all citations from the Midgley-Walgren correspondence in my possession.

7 Ibid.

8 Louis Midgley to Kent L. Walgren, 17 March 1980, p. 4.

9 Ibid.

Of course Midgley recognized that Walgren's list of Morgan's papers hardly exempted Brodie from criticism. "Is there something in this correspondence," he asked, "that somehow shows that Brodie could not possibly be guilty of the kind of errors found in Thomas Jefferson?" "Do you really think the list of seven items you mentioned is grounds for ranking Morgan as the best Mormon historian? That list," Midgley noted, "wouldn't put Morgan in the top fifty." In an apparent attempt to explain Walgren's use of Morgan to defend Brodie, Midgley wondered, "Are you, by any chance, related to Morgan?"11

By this time Walgren had had enough. "I decline your invitation to debate the competence of Dale Morgan for a different reason: It is apparent from your letter that you are unfamiliar with his work." Changing the emphasis from Morgan's help with No Man Knows My History, Walgren continued, "If, and when, you are ready to offer specific criticism of Morgan's work (which includes a list of books and articles as long as your arm), I will accept the bait." Addressing Midgley's final question, Walgren concluded: "I am not related to Morgan, nor did I ever meet him. My 'novel' opinion 'about Morgan's greatness' is based on my own study of his work."12 Walgren was never willing or perhaps never able to explain how Morgan's correspondence with Brodie made No Man Knows My History "impenetrable."

When Walgren finally cut off the correspondence, Midgley rejoined that "it certainly would be easy for you to inform me about the contents of that [Morgan's] correspondence that presumably . . . [show] how Morgan kept Brodie from making errors." "If you can't show how Morgan is relevant to the issues you raised, then please leave him out of the discussion of Brodie. Morgan was your idea; all I did was ask you to show why he did for Brodie what you claimed, that is, put her beyond criticism for all these years."13 Midgley had the last word on the subject; Walgren abandoned the discussion he had begun, looking bad.

11 Louis Midgley to Kent L. Walgren, 14 April 1980, p. 3.
Having enjoyed the private quarrel between Walgren and Midgley—it was fine entertainment—of course my interest was piqued when *On Early Mormonism* was finally published. If we exclude his bibliographical works, *On Early Mormonism* provides a useful compendium of Morgan’s contributions to the study of the Mormon past. If the book had been competently compiled, it would have been possible to gauge Morgan’s influence on Brodie and also the degree of his competence in Mormon history.

The book, *Dale Morgan On Early Mormonism*, containing fifty of Morgan’s letters and the material he intended to include in his history of the Church, was published some three years before *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* first appeared. The current year, 1996, is the tenth anniversary of the Review’s publication. The book richly deserves to be reviewed in these pages because it contains one of the earliest versions of what may justly be called the modern naturalistic explanation of Joseph Smith’s prophetic charisms and the production of the Book of Mormon. “The Letters” include some of Morgan’s most interesting letters concerning himself and Mormon things. They often contain personal items and are addressed to a variety of people, including Fawn Brodie, Juanita Brooks, Madeline Reeder McQuown, Francis W. Kirkham, and Stanley Ivins, among others. One would be hard put to select letters that were more interesting or more telling from Dale Morgan’s vast correspondence.

The portion of the book titled “The History” contains the four chapters that Morgan completed and the three rough draft chapters of his projected multivolume Mormon history. The rough draft chapters required the editor to add “necessary transitions” (p. 218). “The History” contains, as Morgan’s editor says, “a carefully conceived naturalistic explanation for the production of the Book of Mormon” (p. 217). Morgan’s history ends abruptly with his analysis of the Book of Mormon. That analysis contains much of the same material that Fawn Brodie included in the first edition of *No Man Knows My History*, but which, no longer under the influence of Morgan, she seems to have abandoned or modified in favor of a psychological explanation in her copy in my possession. Walker’s correspondence, while arguing along much the same lines as Walgren, never mentioned Morgan.
second-edition “Supplement.” Both sections of the book are faithful to the materials Morgan left behind. The few errors that have crept into the book are either obvious, inconsequential, or belong to Dale Morgan himself. An index, which the book lacks, would greatly improve its worth as a reference.

**Portrait of the Historian as a Young Man**

Born in 1914, Dale Lowell Morgan wrote books, articles, and bibliographies on Western trappers, lakes, rivers, and trails. He claimed to have been “born into a thoroughly orthodox Mormon family” (p. 26)—he was, or at least claimed to be, the great grandson of Orson Pratt (p. 44)—and was, in his estimation, at least until his “fourteenth birthday, probably a more dutiful Mormon than the average—president of my quorum of deacons” (p. 26). When he was fourteen he lost his hearing through meningitis, an event that profoundly altered his life. He studied commercial art in high school and graduated from the University of Utah as an art major (p. 27). Morgan had wanted to “make a living in commercial art and advertising” (p. 27), but he was unable to find work. He was eventually employed by the Historical Records Survey of the Works Progress Administration in Ogden and spent most of his life working in libraries or archives.  

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14 For those ready to conjure the specter of *ad hominem*, I must point out that I am not basing any kind of argument on the way in which Morgan lived his life. I am, in a way that Morgan himself could have appreciated, merely reporting “the facts as I find them.” I am, as far as these things go, merely following the admonition of D. Michael Quinn: “If I were to write about any subject unrelated to religion, and I purposely failed to make reference to pertinent information of which I had knowledge, I would be justifiably criticized for dishonesty.” D. Michael Quinn, “On Being a Mormon Historian (and Its Aftermath),” in *Faithful History: Essays on Writing Mormon History*, ed. George D. Smith (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), 76. Compare Quinn’s opinion in his “Editor’s Introduction,” in *New Mormon History* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1992), xiii n. 5.

During his high school and college years Morgan went through “a period of adjustment” and ultimately lost his faith. “I could no longer believe the things I had formerly believed,” he said, and did “not see the necessity of God in the scheme of things” (p. 28). Although he liked “to sketch nudes in pastel” and visited the University of Utah from time to time for that purpose (p. 27), did not believe in God, and thought Joseph Smith a conscious deceiver, he nonetheless described himself as “a better Mormon than those who go to church on Sunday and pay their tithing” (p. 28). The reason for this, he said, was his belief in what he called “the decencies of human relations”—his sort of secular faith. He portrayed himself as more tolerant than believing Mormons—“I don’t ask that others believe or think as I do, but also ask that they try not to enforce their beliefs and thinking upon me”—but he did not, or could not, see the inconsistency of that position with his insistence on “certain imbecilities in the social development of the Mormon Church” and “the fanatic founders of the religion” (p. 28).

Morgan’s hearing loss compelled him to conduct his conversations in writing. When he found himself in a group, questions to him had to be written down. He loved to write letters. Unlike normal participants in a group conversation, for example, when he met with Fawn Brodie, Bernard DeVoto, and Madeline Reeder McQuown, notes of the give-and-take of the discussion would have to be made for him since he could not read the lips of everyone who might be talking at a given moment. He was curious about his neighbors because, he said, “I don’t become casually acquainted as most people do, and thus am left to my own fantasies to explain things people customarily pick up by a kind of social osmosis” (p. 189).

Morgan seems to have spent a good part of his adult life infatuated with Madeline Reeder McQuown. John Phillip Walker coyly refers to their relationship as “complex,” but that hardly begins to describe their bizarre “thirty-five-year relationship” (p. 57). Morgan and McQuown had met while Morgan attended the University of Utah. Her first marriage to Jarvis Thurston ended

John Phillip Walker indicates that Morgan lost his hearing when he was thirteen (p. 7). Morgan’s letter to Juanita Brooks indicates that he lost his hearing “in the summer of 1929,” which would have made him fourteen.
in 1940 and she married Thomas McQuown in January 1941. Her marriage to McQuown did not stop Morgan from courting her.\footnote{Among the more bizarre letters in the McQuown Collection is one that Morgan wrote during the time that Madeline was divorcing Thurston. Morgan’s signature is crossed out and Madeline had written in pencil, “Tom Tom Tom Tom.” The letter had been folded, and Madeline wrote Thomas McQuown’s name and other gibberish on the back of the letter. It looks like something from a high school student, not a woman in her midthirties. Morgan to McQuown, 14 March 1940, Madeline Reeder McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 1, p. 2, University of Utah Marriott Library, Salt Lake City.} He sent her clothing (“I rather fancy myself as a selector [sic] of wardrobes for you,” p. 55) and they exchanged erotic poetry and erotic, if not pornographic, semiautobiographical short stories.\footnote{Note especially where Morgan says “Even 18 hours later I still love you!” (p. 59). This sort of talk was not uncommon, “Damn it, why aren’t you somewhere around, so I can buy a flower for you when the fancy takes me—or even grow one for you that we can enjoy together? Give me a good answer, if you can” (p. 73). Morgan complained about McQuown’s insistence that he not put personal things in letters. “There are all sorts of personal things I might add before sending this off, but you do not like me to write to you very personal letters, dissatisfied though you are with any other kind, and this is a frustrating limitation indeed, which I only break out of now and then in a mood of defiance.” Morgan to McQuown, 11 September 1951, McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 8, p. 2. McQuown’s letters to Morgan were nearly always signed “much love always.”} Many of Morgan’s letters (now housed in the Madeline Reeder McQuown collection at the University of Utah) have portions of pages torn away, apparently censoring potentially sensitive materials. McQuown would mutilate Morgan’s letters by simply tearing off the personal portions. She was not especially careful about this and would sometimes destroy either more or less than she intended. In some instances it is not possible to date a letter because that portion has been torn off, or the page with the date is simply missing. The collection contains folders full of torn pages that are little more than mere scraps.

McQuown did not have an entirely stable personality and, as might be expected, the relationship was at times stormy. She had at one time, on discovering she had cancer, intended to shoot...
Morgan and then herself. When she moved to Las Vegas, she left town without informing him, but Morgan, good detective that he was, tracked her down.\footnote{See "An interview conducted by Dr. Everett L. Cooley and Della Dye with Gerald Finnin re: Madeline McQuown in Salt Lake City, Utah, on February 24, 1976," McQuown Papers, bx 1, fld 2, p. 18. The pages are not numbered.} It may be impossible at this point to determine the truth of the matter, coincidence or not, but not long after Thomas McQuown accepted a job in San Francisco and moved his family there from Ogden, Utah, Morgan arranged for a job at the Bancroft Library, apparently to be near Madeline. It is worth noting that Morgan's first book, *The Humboldt: Highroad of the West* was dedicated "To Madeline."\footnote{Dale L. Morgan, *The Humboldt: Highroad of the West* (New York: Farrar and Rinehart, 1943). Interestingly, Morgan also thanked Thomas McQuown in the acknowledgments.} Morgan seems to have attempted to persuade her to leave her husband throughout their relationship, finally delivering an ultimatum in 1967.\footnote{See especially p. 60, "Well, why not make your way here? Returning to our subject of yesterday, suppose you name a date when you will leave San Francisco, and I will lay out an itinerary, etc., for you. Put up or shut up, darling!" Also Morgan to McQuown, 9 February 1967, Dale L. Morgan Papers (microfilm of the Bancroft holdings), MS 560, roll 5, frames 799-801, Special Collections Department, University of Utah Library, Salt Lake City. This letter seems to have been written after some kind of confrontation that Morgan described as a "debacle." See also Morgan's despondent letter dated 30 July (no year), Morgan Papers, roll 5, frames 802-5.} Madeline, for reasons that are complex if not neurotic, was unable to bring herself to leave Thomas McQuown. She seems to have suffered bouts of depression and even toyed with suicide.\footnote{Morgan scolded her, "I want to know that you are feeling better and not monkeying around with carbon monoxide any more, and otherwise living a righteous life... and thinking of me once in a while" (p. 71, ellipses in original). Walker's footnote indicates that it is "unclear what Morgan was referring to here" (p. 73), but the practical uses of carbon monoxide are fairly limited.} Morgan himself struggled with depression and suicide:

I would give a very great deal to talk to you. But even here there is a kind of paralyzing sense of futility. . . . But what would be more empty than to come up and see you and have you indifferent to my coming, not wanting me to come or embarrassed because I am
such a damned fool as not to know when I am not wanted.

As it is, I can do nothing, and I wander around the house disconsolately, hating to be here yet hating more the idea of going anywhere and being alone with myself and without you. I can't even bring myself to go out and walk around the block because I will walk with nothing, and will only be conscious of being with myself—a sort of self-consciousness of which I have a horror. I simply ache with doing nothing and with being able to do nothing. I lie upon the bed as though I were adrift upon an absolute emptiness which I cannot stand, and then I look at a book, and I wonder what I am doing reading other men's books when my own have not been written...

So today I just do nothing and am caught upon a nothingness and life has a more dreary futility than I had ever conceived possible. There doesn't seem to be anything that is worth doing—I think of the jobs I might have, and they mean nothing. Books don't seem worth reading or writing, and my family means nothing to me except a kind of constant irritation. Sometimes I speculate about death and whether I conceivably could commit suicide, but death seems even more futile than life, and it's so damned messy—my family would have to be concerned with stowing me away in a coffin, transfixed by all the personal disgrace or irresponsibility which attaches to a family which believes it could not create a world... which this lost member of its family could find worth living in... I do not say that I think seriously of suicide, but I am not talking now simply to startle you. These thoughts go through my mind when I feel no slightest personal warmth in the world.22

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22 Morgan to McQuown, 30 July (no year), 1–4, Morgan Papers, roll 5, frames 802–5. This letter is double spaced, a rarity for Morgan. The double spacing may indicate that it is a draft of a letter that was never sent.
For over twenty years Madeline McQuown had convinced everyone in her inner circle that she was working on a massive and definitive biography of Brigham Young. For most of that time she claimed to be nearly finished. Although Morgan discussed a contract for the book with a Rinehart representative in 1948, and although he talked of the book as being almost finished for most of the twenty years—undoubtedly based on what she had told him—McQuown was able to complete no more than five sketchy chapters consisting of little more than 157 pages. She was able to use the book, however, to string Morgan along, insisting on his help, but always refusing to provide any portion of the manuscript for him to read or criticize. Meanwhile she complained that the Young biography was ruining her health and used that to explain why the book was not nearing completion and then she used both her health and incomplete book to keep Morgan from seeing the manuscript. Obviously, as time went by, she could not tell Morgan that her manuscript was not complete and for him to actually see the manuscript would force her to admit that in twenty years she had hardly started writing. If she had allowed that to happen, her elaborate deception would have been exposed.

23 In 1948 Morgan reported to Brodie that “Madeline and I drove to Evanston Thursday for a close look at Echo Canyon. We would have loved to have you along. She is faced with a serious cutting of her book; it runs to over a thousand pages!” Morgan to Brodie, 22 May 1948, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 11, p. 1. I would assume that Morgan obtained the information from McQuown during the trip.

24 The first chapter of McQuown’s biography of Brigham Young, King of the Deseret, appears to be substantially complete; it consists of twenty-two pages. Drafts of chapters two through five are more or less complete. Chapter six, however, is little more than mere notes. I have attempted to be as generous as possible when counting the pages to McQuown’s manuscript; undoubtedly others may count differently. The difficulty of the task is compounded by the existence of two or three drafts of the same chapter and by the insertion of addenda pages in otherwise consecutively numbered chapters. I am tempted to say that, although Morgan never suspected, her efforts at “cutting” her thousand-page manuscript were wildly successful.

25 Morgan seems to have realized all of this. He wrote to McQuown complaining that “you don’t, as a matter of fact, attach much importance to working on, or at least finishing, your book. It is, in sober truth, the other way around. It is important to you not to finish your book. It always has been important to you not to finish your book.” Morgan to McQuown, 9 February 1967, p. 2, Morgan Papers, roll 5, frames 799–801. By 21 August 1967, however, when he wrote to
Fortunately, or unfortunately, depending on your point of view, Morgan even talked Fawn Brodie out of writing a biography of Brigham Young because of the book that he was confident that McQuown would complete.26

Dale Morgan’s “Sealed Book”

Dale Morgan seems to have had his own sort of “Brigham Young biography,” however. For most of his adult life he talked about writing a substantial history of the Church which he hoped would become the definitive work on the subject. In April 1942 Morgan told Juanita Brooks “that I believe I am now capable of writing that definitive history of the Mormons” (p. 26). He indicated that he had “an emotional understanding of Mormonism, and also an intellectual detachment essential to the critical appraisal of it” (p. 26). He was, he said, “spending all my spare hours doing research for the Mormon books” (p. 27).

In 1942, Morgan told S. A. Burgess that he had “read through hundreds of diaries, and ... had access to scores of official minute books and other documents concerned with the practical working of polygamy as a social system” (p. 40) and went on to explain that he “personally entertain[ed] a large project in

Fawn Brodie, Morgan was back to the story about McQuown’s book being “substantially complete” (p. 207). One wonders how he could so easily see through the deception in February, yet be persuaded by it again in August. 26 Morgan wrote Brodie, “Madeline has been working determinedly on her MS despite all physical handicaps the past two years, and from December to July had an apartment in Berkeley to enable her to work at the Bancroft. Her book is now substantially complete, but is so massive a production—it may yet have to be a two volume work—that she has been making a violent effort at compression” (p. 207). Morgan’s report to Brodie is illustrative of the sort of tall tale, if one may call it that, that McQuown told Morgan. At the time that Morgan wrote to Brodie, 1967, McQuown had been working on her Brigham Young biography for over twenty years. She certainly dissembled on the question of its status for most of that time. Morgan went on to report that he had “not read any of it, as she has preferred to work independently and show it to me only when prepared to let loose of it, but she has done an amazing research job, and clearly the book will be an event” (p. 207). He then advised Brodie “to wait and see where she comes out at finally, what her standpoint is on Brigham, and what might be left for someone else to say. But this is something that you will have to decide for yourself” (p. 208). The pious may be tempted to see the hand of God in all this.
Mormon history" (p. 41). It was to be a multivolume work, perhaps as many as four or five, usually three, but at least two, and was to be comprehensive; the first volume to cover the period to 1844, the second volume to cover the period until Brigham Young’s death in 1877, and the third volume to bring the story "down to our own time" (p. 159). The amount of research necessary to complete the project was massive. Morgan spent most of 1946 and 1947 going through the National Archives, Library of Congress, and the New York Public Library. The last half of 1947 and the first third of 1948 he spent traveling through New England and the Midwest, tracing the path of the early Saints and digging through libraries and archives.

In 1948 Morgan had contracted with Rinehart to produce the volumes. He proposed submitting the volumes "successively on August 1, 1949, August 1, 1950, and August 1, 1951" (p. 160). He then accepted an advance of $750 to complete the first volume. However, by April 7, 1949, he was forced to admit that the writing was proceeding slowly. He said, "I seem to work all the time without ever having much to show for the time put in" (p. 168). Some of this extra time was spent attempting to find rare or obscure publications, most of them housed in the Church archives. Although the Church archives had refused him access to its materials—Morgan seemingly thought the archives were a research library, while the Historian’s Office thought they were a private library (p. 154)—he continued to attempt to retrieve materials through the back door, as it were, under the auspices of the Utah State Historical Society (p. 172). Morgan had admitted that he had not "always been quite ethical in drawing upon the Historian’s Office for stuff" (p. 30), and, given his review in 1945 of Fawn Brodie’s infamous No Man Knows My History, it is not surprising that the Historian’s Office would deny him access.

By 8 September 1949, Morgan again admitted to Brodie that his "book [was] coming along slowly" (p. 174). Although he was well past the deadline, he seemed to enjoy promoting his books to whomever would listen. On 18 December 1950, he wrote to McQuown to tell a story of how Israel Smith (then President of the

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27 Morgan to Brodie, 28 January 1946, p. 2 bx 7, fld 7, Brodie Papers.
Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) and Francis Kirkham had dropped by his apartment to discuss his research. Morgan reported that Smith was "extremely interested in my book" (p. 179); he had a flair for explaining the great things his book would accomplish and always had a mastery of every historical detail, however obscure.29

Sometime in early January 1952, with the book some two and a half years overdue, Stanley Rinehart decided to cancel Morgan’s contract. To Morgan it seemed that the letter was “so nasty in its tone that I bridled all over” (p. 193). Rinehart pointed out that Morgan had been working on his book for seventeen years.

We have now received three chapters, so preliminary in nature that they give no indication of the projected book, and the volume of correspondence far outweighs this amount of manuscript. It seems to us grossly unfair for you to draw an advance and agree to a production schedule which called for the first volume two and a half years ago, and then make so little apparent effort to fulfill your commitment. (p. 193)

Rinehart offered to allow Morgan to complete the book or return the advance. Morgan complained bitterly, “neither for $750 or any other sum do I give any man the right to insult or condescend to me” (p. 193). Morgan decided to contract with Bobbs-Merrill for a biography of Jedediah Smith, for which he received a $750 advance, and refunded that amount to Rinehart for the release of his contract. In that way “the Mormon book need go to the printer only when I am satisfied with it finally,"

29 Morgan told Fawn Brodie essentially the same story the next day. See Morgan to Brodie, 19 December 1950, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 12, p. 1. One of the interesting things about On Early Mormonism is that, when faced with a choice between letters which relate essentially the same information, Walker almost always chooses the more dull letter to Madeline Reeder McQuown rather than a similar letter to Brodie. The reason may be that the letters published in the book are found in the McQuown Papers. I have not bothered to check. Nevertheless the reader does not have the opportunity to enjoy Morgan’s ironic sense of humor. For example, “My sister seems to go on the principle that what is good enough for you [Brodie] is good enough for her, for she has a baby girl born December 3. So what’s it going to be next time around, Fawn, a little Joseph Smith Brodie or an Emma Smith Brodie?” Ibid.
Morgan wrote (p. 194). *Jedediah Smith and the Opening of the West*, all 468 pages of it, was published a year later in 1953.

Although Morgan was without a contract for his *magnum opus*, the work for which he was surely to be remembered, he continued to talk about completing it for the rest of his life. He wrote to Brodie in 1955, explaining that he would get back to his Mormon book once he finished his book of Jedediah Smith maps (pp. 201–2). He mentioned it again in 1957 (p. 204), 1967 (p. 207) and 1970 (p. 211). During his entire life, and even in the nineteen years between the termination of his contract with Rinehart and his death in 1971, there was scarcely a person he talked to about Mormon things whom he did not impress with his vast store of detail and with tall tales of his forthcoming definitive history of Mormonism.

The completed four chapters and appendix of Morgan’s book, housed in the Madeline Reeder McQuown collection, consist of one hundred and twenty double-spaced pages. Some of these chapters contain Morgan’s handwritten changes and corrections. The three draft chapters from Morgan’s papers, housed at

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31 Mention of his “Mormon book” in *On Early Mormonism* is not representative of the amount of correspondence in which he in some way talked about the book. Note also Morgan’s confident statement, “I think my book completely polishes off the First Vision,” letter fragment, Madeline Reeder McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 17; “I finally realized that all my time here would have to be spent on my book,” letter fragment, McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 13; “as Rinehart’s letter arrived in the midst of it, you can imagine how well received were his easy remarks about the time I require to write the kind of book I want mine to be,” letter fragment, McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 17; “my demonstration that the revivals which figure in Mormon history took place in 1824–25, five years after the supposed First Vision, and a year or more after the Angel Moroni looked in on Joseph is conclusive, I think, and will probably be regarded as the most important single contribution of my book,” letter fragment (1947?), McQuown Papers, bx 2, fld 15; “I once thought of writing in four or five volumes, and I don’t say I won’t yet, but practical considerations may have a compressive effect,” Morgan to Brodie, 28 January 1946, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 7, p. 2.

32 For those who are counting, that makes some thirty-six years he talked about his great work. I am unwilling to count pages, but Morgan wrote or edited no less than twenty books comprising thousands of pages in the nineteen years after 1952.
the Bancroft and printed in the book, required extensive editing and some editorial decisions (p. 217). The book ends abruptly with the chapter on the Book of Mormon. It is as though Morgan was only able to work through his version of the history of the crucial foundation events. Morgan had thought that when he finished "the absolutely controversial chapters which set Joseph up in business as a prophet" the book would begin to flow.33 One of the more striking characteristics of Morgan’s book, when compared to Fawn Brodie’s No Man Knows My History, is that his does not “flow.”

Dale Morgan, Fawn Brodie, and No Man Knows My History

Dale Morgan met Fawn Brodie in 1943 when they both lived in Washington, D.C.34 By this time Brodie had been researching what would become No Man Knows My History for some five years.35 Whatever the details of their first meeting, Morgan became intensely interested in Brodie’s project. From 1943 to 1947 they exchanged a flurry of letters, first identifying and interpreting documents and then, after the publication of No Man Knows My History, discussing the reaction to the book, including Brodie’s excommunication.36

33 Letter fragment to Madeline Reeder McQuown (1947?), McQuown Papers, bx 2, fdl 15. The entire paragraph is worth quoting: “I have been working hard on my book and feel better about it. When a book begins to flow, there is no feeling quite like it, just as there is no feeling quite so disintegrative when a book will not move, or when the writing is no good. I am now moving past the most difficult parts, the absolutely controversial chapters which set Joseph up in business as a prophet, and as the Mormon and non-Mormon view of him become more congruent and unite as a narrative, things will go faster. Although it will be a hard ten weeks work, it is not unreasonable to think I will have the book done by April. What I would then like is to put it on ice for a few months and then polish it in cold blood, but I will have to manage as I can within the framework of my obligations.”


36 Morgan reacted to Brodie’s excommunication by writing the following: “A thing like that is a rude shock, there’s no two ways about it. If one could
Some of the help Morgan provided Brodie took the form of providing sources. He told her of Wilhelm Wyl’s tale of Porter Rockwell attempting to murder Lilburn Boggs, which, like many of the things he provided, showed up in her book (p. 53).\(^\text{37}\) (Brodie noted that “it is possible, of course, that Bennett’s and Jackson’s accusations were pure fabrication,”\(^\text{38}\) but not until after she had told the story with all its lurid detail.) He also pointed her toward genealogical information about the Smith family, Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* (with which they were apparently familiar through B. H. Roberts’s “Parallel”), various sensational stories about the feared and dangerous Danites, and the secret Council of Fifty. Morgan also helped her sort out various details about Joseph’s wives.\(^\text{39}\) Few portions of *No Man Knows My History* went without help or comment from Morgan. He was especially useful in matters of detail and sources.

The greatest help Morgan may have provided, however, came in the form of comments on Brodie’s manuscript. In August 1944 he indicated that he had “done practically nothing in [his] spare time but read [Brodie’s] manuscript” (p. 67). He described it as resign from the church, you and I would have resigned ten years ago. But one cannot resign, one can only be excommunicated, and I would guess that as in my own case, you did not demand excommunication because there was no point to causing needless pain to numerous relatives” (p. 126). Morgan went on to explain, or perhaps wish, that his own book might get him thrown out of the Church. “Anyhow, by that time I may be in your company, though it is true I don’t have any vindictive avuncular church authorities in the undergrowth of my life” (p. 126). Exactly who the “vindicative” relatives were that had Brodie excommunicated is unclear and is probably just hyperbole on Morgan’s part. She reported that two missionaries delivered the letter inviting her to a bishop’s court, thus making it appear to be a local matter. She did not elect to attend the “court,” instead sending a letter explaining that she “was a heretic.” Stephenson, “Brodie: An Oral History Interview,” 102. Newell Bringham, “Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie,” 120, indicates that William H. Reeder, then president of the Eastern States Mission, supervised Brodie’s excommunication. It is not clear that Reeder is related to the McKay family, although he was Madeline Reeder McQuown’s uncle.

\(^\text{38}\) Ibid., 331.
\(^\text{39}\) Morgan to Brodie, 16 February 1944, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 3; Morgan to Brodie, 12 February 1944, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 3; Morgan to Brodie, 14 January 1943, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 2; Morgan to Brodie, 3 August 1944, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld 4.
“thoroughly engrossing” and was unable to put it down until “2 A.M.” (p. 67). “The research,” he said, “is wide and deep without being ostentatious, the prose is clean and on the whole admirably muscular” (p. 67). If he heaped uncritical praise on the book, he also noted that the “only really grave defect in the first 25 chapters [!] is the handling of the Nauvoo material” (p. 67). He went on to warn her of “the amount of space you give to polygamy” (p. 68) and indicated that she had “not hesitated to come to bold judgments on the basis of assumptions” (p. 69). While he thought they sometimes “come off astonishingly,” he also warned that sometimes “they leave you [Brodie] out on limbs” (p. 69). “The point is,” he said, “by their very boldness, these generalizations expose you to attack as you are exposed in no other way” (p. 69) “And nowhere will you be more vulnerable... than in the area of generalizations. Because your generalizations about Smith’s character and related matters are of key importance to your book” (p. 69). He indicated that he had not performed a minute study of her sources and hence “cannot say where your [Brodie’s] generalizations are abundantly supported in fact and where they represent, to a degree, your own intuitions” (p. 69). He concluded by warning Brodie that “it is highly important that you should not talk like God on insubstantial foundations” (p. 70).

When No Man Knows My History was finally published just over a year later, Morgan was among the first to review it.40 He then embarked upon a long campaign of responding to the various criticisms of the book. By far the longest letter reproduced in On Early Mormonism—running ten pages—is Morgan’s reply to Bernard DeVoto’s review (pp. 106–15).41 Writing to Brodie and telling her of his exchange with DeVoto, Morgan said “the tone of my letter was on the tactless side” (p. 116).42 Morgan could

40 Morgan, “A Prophet and His Legend,” 7-8.
41 This is one of the few places in the book in which things begin to be garbled. The letter itself has the date of 2 January 1946; On Early Mormonism has only “January 1946.” The heading on the following pages incorrectly assigns the letter “To Fawn Brodie—1945” until the very last page of the letter. See also Morgan’s initial reaction to DeVoto’s review, 92–101.
42 Again, On Early Mormonism has the date of this letter as “January 1946.” The letter itself, however, has the date as 7 January 1946.
hardly tolerate criticism of *No Man Knows My History* and even found himself responding vigorously to Juanita Brooks's mild criticisms (pp. 119–24).  

When Hugh Nibley published "No Ma'am, That's Not History," Morgan described it as "something of a slapstick performance" (p. 125). Neither Brodie nor Morgan knew who Nibley was and Morgan speculated, incorrectly, that he must be Preston

\[\text{43} \] Newell Bringhamurst notes that Brooks wrote to Hugh Nibley to defend *No Man Knows My History* after she had read "No Ma'am, That's Not History." After reporting that Brooks claimed that "we have been entirely too hysterical about [No Man Knows]," Bringhamurst, "Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie," 118, indicates that Brooks "pointed out a number of errors and misstatements made by Nibley." Bringhamurst does not indicate the degree to which Brooks was eager to defend Brodie. According to Brooks, "her book is good for the church and good for us all, if only to stimulate further study." Juanita Brooks to Hugh Nibley, 7 November 1946, Juanita Brooks Collection, Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City, bx 1, ffd 13, p. 1. Brooks's specific criticisms of Nibley are, to say the least, a little farfetched. She complained, "has there never really been a Mormon scholar? To me that would be a reflection on our church." Nibley had reference to people like Augustine, who spent his entire life attempting to assimilate the Gospel as he knew it to Neoplatonism. Brooks also commented on Nibley's line that "there has never been a council or synod to alter or even discuss any matter of doctrine. " Seems to me that our doctrine might well be discussed with profit, and I thought that the Quorum of Twelve did not shun it." Nibley was referring to the great councils (for example, of Nicaea), in which the greatest scholars of the age attempt to make sense out of confusing apostate doctrines like the Trinity. The Saints have never had need for any such thing. To have the Quorum of the Twelve discuss issues hardly constitutes a council or synod. Finally, Brooks complained about Nibley's statement that "the gospel as the Mormons know it sprang full grown from the words of Joseph Smith. It has never been worked over or touched up in any way, and is free of revisions and alterations." She had three items in which she thought the gospel had been changed: the law of consecration, polygamy, and the United Order. However one chooses to think of such things, they are still discussed and, at least in the case of the law of consecration and the United Order, the Saints still look forward to the day in which it will again be implemented, or they simply live them as best they can right now. In any case, all of these items are or can be profitably talked about in priesthood meeting, for example. These were Brooks's best examples; the other few are not as good. Her best arguments hardly constitute a criticism of the core of Nibley's stance. For all the defensiveness about Fawn Brodie, and despite those who attempt to portray Brooks as a wonderful symbol of dissent, Brooks was unable to touch Nibley, who seems to have ignored her.
Nibley’s son. He complained to Brodie that “Nibley is much more intoxicated with his own language than you, the ‘glib English major,’ are” (p. 125). He went on to explain that the interesting thing is that both Nibley and [Albert E.] Bowen actually leave severely alone the structure of your book. Their quarrel,” he continued, “is with words alone” (p. 126). “Actually, you are being challenged on very few fundamental grounds. Change, say, 20 phrases in your book and you have eliminated nine-tenths of their criticisms without in any way impairing the factual structure of the biography” (p. 126). Nibley’s critique, however, was far more fundamental than merely twenty phrases, and no cosmetic change to No Man Knows My History could fix the flaws he identified. Morgan was unable, or perhaps unwilling, to see the similarity between Nibley’s criticism of Brodie and his own warnings a year before. The similarities are striking:

Morgan:

I believe that the greatest part of your trouble is that... the amount of space you give to polygamy sets up strains of disproportion. ... You do not have a sufficient skeleton to support the body of your narrative. (pp. 67–68)

Nibley:

Brodie’s Joseph, rioting with his fifty wives, is not the man whose conceptions of marriage so completely escape her. Emma Smith and Eliza Snow were not acquainted with the oversexed rake that Mrs. Brodie knows so well.

Morgan:

One of the weaknesses of your book [is] that you have not hesitated to come to bold judgments on the basis of

44 Morgan to Brodie, 15 May 1946, Brodie Papers, bx 7, fld. 7, p. 1. Morgan also guessed, incorrectly, that “Preston [was] at least a silent partner in the assault upon your book.”

45 I have excised the editor’s explanatory comment. “(a professor at LDS church-owned Brigham Young University),”

46 Nibley, “No, Ma’am, That’s Not History,” 37.
assumptions . . . [which] sometimes . . . leave you out on limbs. (p. 69)

Nibley:

At the end of the book in which she has leaned so heavily on the categorical “must have,” our author displays an equal virtuosity with the categorical “would have.” She tells us without a moment’s hesitation just what would have happened if the Prophet had not been killed. . . . This is history in the Brodie tradition. The young woman who can tell us with perfect confidence just what must have happened and what would have happened is not one to be stopped by uncooperative documents and recalcitrant sources; and she is most at home when there are no documents at all.47

Morgan:

Your book, with respect to these chapters, rests pretty heavily on the authority of Howe.48

Your chain of reasoning looks logical, but it is attended by a string of ifs all along the line . . . and the probability of error increases as the chain of reasoning lengthens.49

Nibley:

Must it always be “would have” and “must have” and fourth-dimensional psychology and [Howe’s] “Mor-

47 Ibid., 35.
48 Morgan has reference to Eber D. Howe’s Mormonism Unveiled: or, A Faithful Account of That Singular Imposition and Delusion, from Its Rise to the Present Time. With Sketches of the Characters of Its Propagators, and a Full Detail of the Manner in Which the Golden Bible Was Brought before the World. To Which Are Added, Inquiries into the Probability That the Historical Part of the Said Bible Was Written by One Solomon Spalding, More Than Twenty Years Ago, and By Him Intended to Have Been Published as a Romance (Painesville, OH: privately printed, 1834).
monism Unveiled” and reading between the lines of vindictive but ambiguous newspaper articles?\(^{50}\)

Morgan:

And nowhere will you be more vulnerable, in the light of such fault finding, than in the area of generalizations. . . . I cannot say where your generalizations are abundantly supported in fact and where they represent, to a degree, your own intuitions. (p. 69)

Nibley:

The Brodie evolutionary theory rests heavily on the word “now.” If it is written, “he now refused to beat his wife,” or “he now ate eggs for breakfast,” one naturally assumes that the subject formerly did beat his wife in the one case, and in the other, that he formerly did not eat eggs for breakfast. That is what the words insinuate, but it is not what they say: actually the man may never have beaten his wife and always had eggs for breakfast. Mrs. Brodie introduces every selected key event in the life of Joseph Smith with a “now” of this sort, making it appear in each case that the thing was occurring for the first time; for this she has no proof, of course, but the little “now” enables her to build up his career step by step the way she wants it.\(^{51}\)

Morgan:

But it is highly important that you should not talk like God on insubstantial foundations. (p. 70)

Nibley:

When Joseph faced Emma for the last time “he knew she knew that she thought him a coward.” So Brodie knows that Emma knew that Joseph knew what Emma thought! Is this history? There might be some merit in this sort of thing if, like the invented speeches of the Greek historian, it took some skill to produce.

\(^{50}\) Nibley, “No, Ma’am, That’s Not History,” 38.

\(^{51}\) Ibid., 33.
But, if anything, it is hard for the historian to avoid the pitfalls of such cheap and easy psychology. 52

Morgan liked to think that he did not "quarrel, as a rule, anyhow, except with extremely disagreeable people, and only with them when I have to" (p. 116). He was, however, touchy when it came to criticism of No Man Knows My History. Morgan routinely and vigorously challenged anyone who presumed to disagree, especially in any fundamental way, with Fawn Brodie's book.

Dale Morgan on "The Great Divide"

When Marvin S. Hill reviewed the second edition of No Man Knows My History, with its extended "Supplement," in 1974, he claimed that

the mature Brodie seems to be telling us that her old interpretation was too simple. Perhaps what Brodie may have recognized at last is that her original interpretation perceived Joseph Smith in falacious [sic] terms, as either prophet in the traditional Mormon sense or else as faker. Her original thesis opens considerable room for speculation because its either-or alternatives were precisely the same as those of . . . Orson Pratt. . . . But between Pratt and Brodie a hundred years of Mormon experience have intervened. Whereas Pratt affirmed that with Smith's accomplishments he must have been a true prophet, Brodie, looking at the man's limitations, concluded he was a fraud. Possibly now historians should begin to explore the broad, promising middle ground which neither Pratt nor Brodie fully perceived. 53

52 Ibid., 34.
53 Marvin S. Hill, "Secular or Sectarian History? A Critique of No Man Knows My History," Church History 43/1 (March 1974): 96. Commenting in 1988 on his "broad, promising middle ground," Hill identified a "faith-promoting history" "on the right," "professionals" in the center, and those who insist that Joseph Smith was involved in fraud on the left. See Marvin S. Hill, "The 'New Mormon History' Reassessed in Light of Recent Books on Joseph Smith and Mormon Origins," Dialogue 21/3 (Autumn 1988): 115. It is clear, however,
Hill seems to have been looking for a middle ground somewhere between prophet and fraud. Hill therefore seems to be suggesting that it is possible to craft explanations of Joseph Smith that avoid the difficulties of the prophet-fraud dichotomy. These explanations would be superior to those offered by Orson Pratt, on the one hand, and Brodie on the other, to the degree that they were successful in avoiding “either-or alternatives.” At the time Hill was unaware that Brodie, Morgan, and Juanita Brooks had carefully discussed these issues.

When Juanita Brooks wrote to Morgan to explain her reaction to Brodie’s No Man Knows My History, Morgan wrote back to defend and explain his and Brodie’s “point of view upon religious topics” (p. 86). Morgan explained that he thought “Fawn began her book with the zealot’s gleam in her eye, to present ‘the truth’ and overwhelm any unhappy Mormon who might chance to read her disquisition” (p. 86). She matured, he said, as she went along and could finally “see it in proper perspective” (p. 86). The difference between Brooks and Morgan, he explained, “all boils down to that old philosophical conundrum, ‘What is Truth?’ There is no absolute or final definition of truth. It has emotional values for some people, intellectual values for others” (p. 86). He then described how their “points of view upon Mormonism and all religion are rooted in our fundamental viewpoint on God” (p. 86). Brooks had experiences that led her to believe Joseph Smith’s story.54 Morgan’s “attitude,” which he thought he

from his 1974 language, that at that time Hill was describing a middle ground between prophet and not-prophet. Thus Hill could fault Brodie for ignoring “other possibilities; for example, that the witnesses saw the plates as a result of their own psychological and religious needs.” “Secular or Sectarian History,” 92. (Hill does not indicate that one of the possibilities Brodie “ignores” is that they actually saw the plates, exactly as they reported.) In 1974, at least, it is clear that Hill thought that a middle ground between prophet and not-prophet was possible, if not desirable, by appealing to social science categories and explanations borrowed from religious studies. In fairness to Hill, however, he did not have access to Brodie’s papers, which indicate that she had thought such issues through carefully and rejected the possibility of a middle ground between prophet and not-prophet.

54 At times Newell Bringhurst hints at Brooks’s faith, but her story is more detailed and interesting than he lets on; see his “Juanita Brooks and Fawn Brodie,” 115. Brooks indicated that “there are those who do not believe in visions or supernatural manifestations, hence decide that Joseph could not have
shared with Brodie, was that he felt "absolutely no necessity to postulate the existence of God as explanation of anything whatever. To me," Morgan continued, "God exists only as a force in human conduct consequent upon the hypothecation of such a being by man" (p. 87). He described the notion of God as a "quirk in men's minds" and described his own views as "essentially... atheist" (p. 87).

Morgan then explained his own claim to "objectivity." "I put together the facts that I can find, ... and thus slowly and painfully I build toward central conceptions." He was, however, aware of the "fatal defect" in his "objectivity. It is," he said,

had any. A few experiences which I have had personally make me slow to try to judge whether a person has really had an experience with spiritual significance." Her husband, Ernest Pulsipher, was "desperately ill, suffering beyond imagination. We lived," she said, "up on 9th avenue, not far from the L.D.S. hospital. ... Across a deep gully to the west was the State Capitol Building. How was it that one night, when I felt that I MUST have help, that unless I did have it—well, anyway there was a knock, and when I answered the door a man asked, 'Is there any trouble in this house?' I could not answer, I could only point to the man on the bed. Without preliminaries, I got the oil, he administered it to Ern and as he did, Ernest fell asleep. Afterwards he visited a while with me... But he told me a story as incredible as any I have ever heard... He told me that he lived in the southern part of town, that he had been impressed to go uptown, that he had come to the center of town, had transferred to a 9th ave. car, had got off at our stop, walked up past the other four or five doors to our place. He was a recent convert to the church... Anyway I went to bed that night, the first in many, and slept until the sun wakened me in the morning, because Ernest slept, too... Yes, I can hardly believe it myself. Yet at the time it was real. I wrote home about it. I made a note of it in a little record book." Juanita Brooks to Dale Morgan, 9 December 1940, Brooks Collection, bx 1, fld 10, pp. 2-3. Brodie, unsurprisingly, felt the need to explain this experience away. Morgan, on the other hand, was "willing to admit a dozen explanations of this, including pure chance" (p. 118). I expect that many Saints can relate similar experiences. I do not know if Morgan or Brodie ever knew of Brooks's near-death experience. She described leaving her body and seeing herself lying on the bed. She was then transported to her father's home in Bunkerville and saw and heard her family going about their business in the kitchen. "Francis came just after I had come to and turned over. I told him all about it right then. That was Friday night, and on Sunday we went home to visit, and I told my folks, and every word of their conversation was real, even to the slang word mother used when the cinders fell in the mush, the churning, the horse in the manger, the smoking lamp, and all." Juanita Brooks to "Brother and Sister Esplin," 11 September 1939, Brooks Collection, Box 1, fld 4, p. 2.
an objectivity on one side only of a philosophical Great Divide. With my point of view on God, I am incapable of accepting the claims of Joseph Smith and the Mormons, be they however so convincing. If God does not exist, how can Joseph Smith’s story have any possible validity? I will look everywhere for explanations except to the ONE explanation that is the position of the Church” (p. 87).

Brooks, he explained, was on the other side of that Great Divide, largely accepting the claims of Joseph Smith.

Unsurprisingly, the question of whether “Joseph was indeed a conscious fraud and impostor,” that is, prophet or not-prophet, was precisely what Morgan described as “the point of departure” between himself and Brooks—the Great Divide (p. 88). Morgan explained that Brodie “has clarified my thinking in this connection.” Earlier he was “half disposed to accept a median point of view where Mormon and non-Mormon may almost meet” (p. 89). This is Hill’s middle ground. In such a view, Morgan held that “The Mormon may consent to the idea that the plates were only apparently real, that Joseph gained access to them through a series of visions, as a concession from the original Mormon contention that the plates could be felt and hefted. And the non-Mormon may conceive of Joseph as a victim of delusions, a dreamy mystic, so to speak” (p. 89).

Brodie had made Morgan aware, however, of the fundamental flaw with this “middle-ground” explanation. “But when you get at the hard core of the situation,” he later told Brooks, “the Book of Mormon as an objective fact, there isn’t any middle ground; it becomes as simple a matter as the Mormon[s] and anti-Mormons originally said it was” (p. 89). The bottom line was “either Joseph was all he claimed to be, or during the period at least of the writing of the Book of Mormon he was a ‘conscious fraud and impostor’” (p. 89).

Some forty years later Lawrence Foster offered “suggestions” that he thought “could contribute to the development of a comprehensive naturalistic explanation of the Book of Mormon—an explanation which could go beyond the conventional Mormon view that it is a literal history translated by Joseph Smith or the
conventional anti-Mormon view that it is a conscious fraud.” Foster’s explanation was to span the Great Divide; his would be a genuine middle-ground explanation. “The greatest single weakness of most previous interpretations of the Book of Mormon,” according to Foster, “has been their failure to take into account comparative perspectives on revelatory and trance phenomena.” He thought “the Book of Mormon is probably best understood, at least in part, as a trance-related production.” He claimed, “the fact that Smith could work for hours on end, suggests that Smith was acting as an unusually gifted trance figure.” Foster then opined that “available evidence . . . is thus most nearly compatible with the idea that the Book of Mormon should properly be viewed . . . as ‘inspiration’ or ‘revelation’ rather than as a literal translation or history in any sense.” Thus the traditional understanding of the Book of Mormon that is central to the faith, memory, and community of the Saints is trans-

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55 Lawrence Foster, Religion and Sexuality: The Shakers, the Mormons and the Oneida Community (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 294.

56 Ibid., 295. Morgan had already begun to explore and reject the possibilities of “trance phenomena” in 1945. He explained to Bernard DeVoto that “No visions or hallucinations in themselves can explain the physical text of the Book of Mormon. I was at one time half inclined to the belief that Joseph might have been a borderline personality, subject indeed to hallucinations, and that he may as he supposed have seen the Golden Plates with the eye of faith (call it delusion), dictating the book from something like a trance state. This idea has the advantage of leaving Joseph’s sincerity unimpaired, and makes less troublesome the analysis of his subsequent career. . . . One hard fact alone seems to me to require us to come to grips with a decision that Joseph either was all he said he was, a prophet of the living God translating from plates of gold, or a conscious fraud and impostor. This is the matter contained in the Book of Mormon and constituting what is called the Isaiah problem. I cannot find it logical that Joseph committed these thousands of words from Isaiah to memory. I find it a good deal more reasonable to conjecture that he had an opened Bible with him on the other side of the curtain” (p. 96). Foster clearly likes the idea of leaving Joseph’s sincerity intact. Morgan, on the other hand, would ignore the testimony that eyewitnesses to the production of the Book of Mormon, after the loss of the 116 pages, report nothing—let alone a curtain or blanket—between Joseph and his scribe. See Lyndon W. Cook, ed., David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness (Orem, UT: Grandin Book, 1991), 55 and especially 173.

57 Foster, Religion and Sexuality, 296.

58 Ibid., 297.
formed if not jettisoned. "From a Mormon perspective," Foster admonished (in language remarkably similar to Morgan's), "the book could then be described as 'divinely inspired' [Morgan's 'dreamy mystic']; from a non-Mormon view-point, it could be seen as an unusually sophisticated product of unconscious and little-known mental processes" which were Morgan's "only apparently real" plates. Foster's explanation, however, does not begin to address the problems that Morgan saw in such middle-ground explanations. The Book of Mormon, by its very existence (Morgan's "Book of Mormon as an objective fact") demands to be taken seriously as ancient history. Foster's explanation demands that the Saints abandon the very claims that separate and distinguish them from others and that provide their own unique identity.

Dale Morgan on "Objective" History

Dale Morgan was very much a child of his times when it came to the question of whether objective history is a possible or desirable thing. He talked about objectivity with innocence and never, as far as the texts he left behind indicate, questioned in any fundamental way the possibility of objectivity.

After explaining to Juanita Brooks that he had not "always been quite ethical in drawing upon the [LDS Church] Historian's Office," he went on to justify that by explaining that he would "make only the most ethical use of the material" he had gathered to date (p. 30). He continued his rationalization, saying that he would only use that material "within the canons of the highest historical objectivity" and indicated that his conscience did not bother him (p. 30). Objectivity, in this sense, appears to mean that Morgan would not sensationalize what he had found.

Not long after he wrote these words, Morgan wrote to S. A. Burgess, an RLDS historian who had written him about an earlier publication, the Utah Guide. In this case he used objectivity as a slogan with which to soften or rebut criticisms from Burgess. He explained that he had attempted to "draw a picture of Mormon beliefs from an objective point of view" (p. 35). Presumably no one would be foolish enough to want to argue with an

59 ibid.
“objective” interpretation. Morgan went on to say that he thought “that any reasoned consideration of these pages will confirm the honesty and objectivity of our observation . . . of the Utah scene” (p. 35). The insistence on honesty, reason, and objectivity was, of course, meant to silence criticism, not to imply any special rigor. Morgan larded the letter with talk of “any objective critic” (p. 36), insisted that Brigham Young biographer M. R. Werner “had no propagandic purpose to serve” (p. 37), talked about “the abstract truth of the matter” (p. 38), and then went on to insist on the “honest picture” of Joseph “as a man” and on “the integrity of our intention and the objectivity of our interpretation” (p. 40). How could anyone disagree with such a wonderfully reasonable explanation?

In moments of reflection Morgan could see that his own “naturalistic” point of view—that is, “disbelieving in the concept of God,” which hence made him “objective” and “unbiased”—would appear to the believer to be biased (p. 43). But even after granting that his “agnosticism” or “atheism” denied the fundamental grounds of faith, he still claimed that his “interpretation of Mormon history will not . . . do such violence to Mormon ideas of that history” (p. 43). He went on in the same letter to boast of his “intellectual detachment” and “scientific attitude” (p. 44), which presumably equipped him to deal objectively with Mormon history. He was naive enough to claim that, “if you gather enough facts, and organize them properly, they provide their own conclusions” (p. 45). He did not see that the theories which identified a “fact” for him and which he used to “organize them properly” were his own constructs and hence shared his own biases, hopes, and assumptions.

When defending No Man Knows My History, Morgan often talked about such things as “intellectual objectivity” (p. 86) or “objective facts” (p. 87). He explained to Juanita Brooks that his motivation in writing Mormon history was to “try to tread objectively between warring points of view, to get at facts, uncover them for facts, and see what the facts have to say to a reasonable intelligence” (p. 121). Throughout his life Morgan used adjectives like “scholarly,” “absolute,” and “scientific” to describe objectivity. He most often used the word objectivity when engaged in a polemic, and then usually to silence criticism. Morgan was, as he
would say of Joseph Smith, “perfectly the expression of the zeitgeist” (p. 68).60

Dale Morgan on Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon

“From the naturalistic point of view that is mine and Fawn’s and yours,” Morgan wrote to Bernard DeVoto, “it is not to be expected that the Book of Mormon should be regarded as the product of a matured intelligence with something to say” (p. 93). Before Morgan actually began writing his book on “The Mormons,” he had already framed his views of Joseph Smith and the foundation events of the Church in dialogues with Fawn Brodie, Juanita Brooks, Bernard DeVoto, and Madeline Reeder McQuown. His assumption that the Book of Mormon was not a product of “a matured intelligence,” whatever else it may mean, clearly colored the way in which Morgan understood the Book of Mormon. The central question for Morgan was whether Joseph Smith was “a conscious fraud and impostor” (p. 96). Once this question was decided, how one chose to tell Joseph’s story of the visions and plates, or even describe the contents of the Book of Mormon, was more or less decided. Morgan thought that Brodie’s “half-remembered dream” explanation of the First Vision was especially reasonable. “I have myself had dreams which persisted as waking memories,” he told DeVoto, “and then faded into a generalized memory in which, after a lapse of time, for all my critical apparatus and detachment, I have found almost impossible to distinguish details actually remembered and dream details inextricably intermingled” (p. 97).61 Morgan’s own explanation of Joseph Smith and early Mormonism followed Fawn Brodie’s

60 Peter Novick does a nice job outlining the received opinions on objectivity and the arguments of those who attempted to criticize those opinions during the 1940s and 1950s. See Novick, That Noble Dream, 250–78.
61 “The awesome vision he described in later years was probably the elaboration of some half-remembered dream, stimulated by the early revival excitement and reinforced by the rich folklore of visions circulating in his neighborhood. Or it may have been sheer invention, created some time after 1830.” Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 25. The 1830 date was forced on Brodie by the 1832 version of the First Vision. She had originally thought the date was 1838.
explanation closely, except when he disagreed with her—then it was usually more radical.

Always conscious of the naturalistic assumptions which controlled his explanatory framework—and that entailed "disbelief in the concept of God"—Morgan crafted his explanation to take into account Joseph's family as well as the larger environment. He began his tale by explaining how "imagination and ambition were never beaten out of [Joseph, Sr.] but these were qualities which did not make any more endurable the drudgery of the farm" (p. 220). Morgan found it necessary to invent an unhappy Joseph Sr. who detested his life on the farm and who escaped in "fantasy" and dreams.62 These qualities he instilled in his son, Joseph. Morgan goes on to explain the "milieu"—the larger culture outside of the immediate influence of his family—in which Joseph found himself. Mound-builders figure prominently in this explanation, like they do in Fawn Brodie's, as do attempts to explain the American Indians as "descendants of the ten tribes of Israel" (p. 227).63 "The social environment was favorable," Morgan said, "the whole climate of opinion and belief in which so much more was possible of growth in another time and place" (p. 229).64 Joseph's environment worked on him to produce the Book of Mormon and later the Church.

62 Richard Bushman, in what is undoubtedly the best book on Joseph Smith, does not resort to novelists' speculation when discussing Joseph or his father. Morgan, Brodie, and their inner circle thought that for a history to read really well some of the novelist's art must be brought to the task. Bushman's effort is better written, and hence more coherent, without the added literary embellishments and speculation. See Richard L. Bushman, Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1984): 29-42.

63 The word mound occurs at least six times on pages 227 and 228. It does not, however, occur in the Book of Mormon at all—an interesting omission, since explaining the mysterious mound-builders was supposedly one of the reasons Joseph fabricated the Book of Mormon. A phrase like "their dead bodies were heaped up upon the face of the earth" occurs only three times in the 588 pages of the first edition of the Book of Mormon. How could Joseph have been so negligent? According to Brodie, "the plan of Joseph's book was to come directly out of popular theory concerning the Moundbuilders." No Man Knows My History, 36.

64 This is not a mistake. It is just slightly less than coherent.
Remarkably, or unremarkably, depending on your point of view, Morgan provided what he thought was Joseph Smith’s “exact analogue” (p. 230), a younger named William Titt. Drawing from the journal of Utah pioneer Priddy Meeks, Morgan explained that Titt was “born a natural seer” (p. 230). William Titt could find lost property with his seerstone, but even in the best case this is where the “exact analogue” to Joseph ends. Titt never produced a long and complex ancient history, he never started a church, and he never claimed to receive revelations or interview angels. At best William Titt is an analogue to the young Joseph portrayed in the documents Morgan thinks most accurate—always the confused and conflicting tales of the Hurlbut affidavits.

Morgan nearly always gives credence to anti-Mormon sources in crafting his story. Although he searched throughout New England to identify “Walters the magician,” and never succeeded, Morgan nevertheless confidently related the infamous Palmyra Reflector story (p. 233). While his footnote to the Walters tale provides some documentation, his letters reveal something of the struggle he faced in attempting to identify Walters.65 Like Brodie before him, Morgan also relied heavily on the authority of E. D. Howe. He uncritically accepted Willard Chase’s and William Stafford’s tales of seerstones and moneyd digging. When Joseph’s own history did not match these wild stories, Morgan complained that “in the autobiography of any but a prophet of God, the experiences Joseph thus lightly passes over would provide one of its most fascinating chapters” (p. 240). Morgan was confident that Joseph’s own history could not be trusted: “Scholarship brought to bear, like the action of X-rays or ultra violet light, brings into shadowy definition the surfaces painted over, which at once are striking in revelation of the intent of the artist, the painful evolution of his conception, and his progressive manipulation of reality in the service of his art” (p. 245).

Since Joseph’s own history could not be trusted—Joseph Smith’s version being “legend and not history” (p. 246)—Morgan set about carefully dissecting that history to uncover what he thought was the real history. He thought that he could demon-

65 Morgan’s 29 August 1949 letter to Stan Ivins indicates some of the difficulties Morgan faced (pp. 173–74). However, this is only one small sample.
strate that “the idea of a visitation from the Father and the Son was a late improvisation, no part at all of his original design” because it was “entirely unknown to his followers before 1838” (p. 247). This is, of course, Fawn Brodie’s original speculation: the First Vision was “sheer invention” after 1838.66 In the 1940s neither Brodie nor Morgan had access to the documents which completely refute this speculation. And that fact alone, of which Morgan was so confident, may indicate something of the reliability of his other speculations.

Whatever one may think of Morgan’s speculation or of the effort he put into it, it is clear that Joseph talked of the First Vision rather frequently. Of course, the 1832 version of Joseph’s history is apparently the earliest written version. However, on 9 November 1835 Joseph told his story to “Joshua, the Jewish Minister”; on 9 October 1835 Joseph told the story to “Bishop Whitney” and “Bishop Partridge”; and on 14 November 1835 Joseph was visited by Erastus Holmes and again related his story. It is not far-fetched to say that Joseph related his vision consistently throughout his life.67 Morgan did not indicate why it would be in Joseph’s self-interest to invent the First Vision, although Morgan was confident he did, and whatever he may have thought on the question, Morgan was just plain wrong.68

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66 In the face of the inconvenient documents, Brodie was forced to revise her initial speculation from 1838 to 1830. So much for a possible test for her theory. She simply changed the date and went on as if nothing had happened to her explanation. No Man Knows My History, 25.

67 See Dean C. Jessee, ed., The Papers of Joseph Smith: Volume I. Autobiographical and Historical Writings (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 5, 114, 125, 137, 272, 390, 409, 430, 444, 448, 461. The journal entry of Alexander Neibaur is especially interesting. Here Joseph relates, a mere month before his death, essentially the 1832 version of the First Vision. Those who are troubled by differences between the various accounts of the First Vision would do well to compare Joseph’s first and last account carefully.

68 An editor’s note laments, “Morgan unfortunately did not have access to the earliest accounts of the First Vision, including an 1832 recital in Joseph Smith’s own hand, which only began surfacing in the late 1960s” (p. 374). While it is true that Morgan did not have access to the accounts in the 1940s and 1950s when he was writing, Dean Jessee published all of the newly discovered documents in 1969, some two years before Morgan’s death. In 1969 Morgan was still promising his book. See Dean C. Jessee, “The Early Accounts of Joseph Smith’s First Vision,” BYU Studies 9/3 (Spring 1969): 275–94.
One of the issues that Morgan thought settled the question of whether the First Vision actually happened was whether a revival occurred in Palmyra at the time Joseph acknowledged "unusual excitement on the subject of religion" (Joseph Smith—History 1:5). Morgan identified the 1817 and 1824 revivals and concluded:

In other words during all these years, when by the necessities of Mormon history Palmyra should have been in continual spiritual torment, its religious life all of a color to grace under the last of the revivalists, the townsfolk were going about their daily labors untroubled by the awful probability that they were children of Wrath and in danger of hell. Not in 1820 as the First Vision would have it, not in 1823 as the Vision of the Angel Moroni would have it, but in 1824 began the revival which has left its indelible impress upon Mormon history (pp. 256–57).

Morgan thought that he had positively identified all the possible revivals in the Palmyra region. He further believed that he had found a firm and incontrovertible test for Joseph's claims. However, as Richard Bushman points out, it now appears that there were indeed "Methodist camp meetings going on through the Spring of 1820 in the 'vicinity' of Palmyra."69 While merely finding a revival does not clear up every seeming problem with Joseph's story,70 once again Morgan was simply wrong on an issue on which he thought Joseph could be tested and found wanting. And it also indicates that Joseph's own story is still the most reliable indicator of Joseph's own history.

69 Richard L. Bushman, "Just the Facts Please," review of Inventing Mormonism: Tradition and the Historical Record, by H. Michael Marquardt and Wesley P. Walters, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon 6/2 (1994): 126. Bushman indicates that "Walter A. Norton has discovered a Palmyra Register article in the 28 June 1820 issue that reported the death of an intoxicated man in Palmyra village and claimed he obtained liquor at 'a camp-meeting held in this vicinity.' When criticized, the editor exonerated the Methodists from blame, as if they were the chief users of the campground, but asserted that the dissolute frequently resorted to the campground for liquor, implying that the grounds were commonly in use." Ibid., 126–27 n. 3.

70 Ibid., 127–30.
Near the end of his chapter on the revivals and the First Vision, Morgan explained that Mormons have accepted the "inconsistency" and "impossibility" of Joseph’s story because "it was emotionally impossible for the Saints to challenge the integrity of their prophet" (p. 260). He explained that the "whole power and discipline of their faith conditioned them to believe." Morgan does not explain how so many were able to leave the Church in Kirtland and openly criticize Joseph, especially those who had been close to him and witnessed the very events which Joseph supposedly fabricated or embellished in 1838. This sort of inconsistency is not uncommon in Morgan’s history, and, unsurprisingly, not uncommon in Brodie’s.

Morgan liked to think that Joseph Smith’s “story of the visions is not a record of genuine event, objective or subjective, but a literary creation, of which we have both the trial draft and the finished work, revealing Joseph’s mind and personality only as any literary work reveals any writer” (p. 260). As it turns out, however, Morgan was simply wrong on every major speculation dealing with the revivals and the First Vision; no good reason exists for the Saints not to believe Joseph’s story.

When Morgan turns his hand to explaining how Joseph came to find the plates, he again turns to Hurlbut and to speculation. Morgan is confident that “Joseph had never been able to regard himself as a son of the soil” (p. 264). This is, of course, pure speculation—literary invention, if you will—on Morgan’s part. Simply, it may be impossible to know how Joseph regarded himself in the 1820s. Some testimony exists from those who knew him intimately when the translation process had started, but Morgan is either unaware of its existence, or chooses to ignore it.71 Morgan prefers the tall tales of Peter Ingersoll and the gossip printed in the Palmyra Reflector.

Morgan cites an inaccurate account from the Reflector printed some four years after the events to describe the contents of the Book of Mormon. According to this account, the book was to provide “an account of the ancient inhabitants (antediluvians) of this country, and where they had deposited their substance, consisting of costly furniture, etc., at the approach of the great del-

71 See, for example, Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, 86.
uge’” (p. 265). But the Book of Mormon contains nothing of the sort. It covers exactly the wrong time period and does not indicate anything of the location of their “substance.” To make matters worse, the newspaper article from which Morgan quotes was printed nearly a year after the Book of Mormon itself was published. By 1831 the editor of the Reflector should have known better. It may be indicative, however, of the sort of thing that was expected, just as the popular misreading of the Book of Mormon expected “wigwam temples” and the lost Ten Tribes.72

Like Brodie before him, Morgan thought that the Book of Mormon was first intended to make money. According to Morgan, “as the glorious consummation of the whole affair, from the profits of the work, the Smiths should be enabled ‘to carry into successful operation the moneydigging business’” (p. 267). Of course, living in desperate poverty, Joseph also once thought of getting “the plates for the purpose of getting rich,” but not only did the angel forbid such an activity, even the Book of Mormon itself indicates that “no one shall have them [the record] to get gain.”73

Morgan would like it to appear that Joseph “was never very communicative as to what happened” the night he retrieved the plates (p. 268). He claimed that even Emma “could not be sure that anything at all had happened” (p. 268). Morgan’s source for this is Lucy Smith’s Biographical Sketches, which reads as follows: “Mr. Smith, on returning home, asked Emma if she knew whether Joseph had taken the plates from their place of deposit, or if she was able to tell where they were. She said she could not tell where they were, or whether they were removed from their place.”74 Morgan reads this as indicating that Emma was not sure

72 Alexander Campbell, Delusions. An Analysis of the Book of Mormon: With an Examination of its Internal and External Evidences, and a Refutation of Its Pretences to Divine Authority (Boston: Greene, 1832), 12.
73 Joseph Smith—History 1:46; Moroni 8:14. The language is unchanged in the first edition of the Book of Mormon, 532–33. Joseph tells the same story in his 1832 history, “I had been tempted of the adversary and sought [sic] the Plates to obtain riches and kept not the commandment that I should have an eye single to the glory of God.” Jessee, Papers of Joseph Smith 1:8. I would like to thank Laurel Howard for helping me track down these references.
74 Lucy Mack Smith, History of Joseph Smith by His Mother Lucy Mack Smith (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, n.d.), 106.
that Joseph really had the plates. It may be, however, that Emma was unwilling to reveal the location of the plates, being under obligation not to divulge the spot, even if Joseph had told her. Morgan went on to indicate, on the authority of the same source, that “Emma was remarkably vague upon the subject in view of the fact that she had accompanied Joseph on that historic night; she did not know where the plates were, or even whether Joseph had removed them from their ancient hiding place” (p. 270). Morgan does not consider the possibility that Emma was unwilling, rather than unable, to tell where the plates were.

Morgan was, however, willing to concede that “the plates were thus not a pure figment of Joseph’s imagination, despite the fact that no one was ever permitted to examine them” (p. 272). He relied on a report that Joseph had told Willard Chase the plates “weighed between forty and sixty pounds, and Martin Harris agreed” (p. 272). Morgan was confident that when Joseph found the plates he still had not thought that they might have a religious content (pp. 274–75). Morgan did not have access to the 1832 account of Joseph’s early visions, had already dismissed the 1838 account as a late fabrication, and uncritically accepted the Hurlbut affidavits. He was thus able to claim that Martin Harris was responsible for providing religious content to the plates. “In this fact,” speculates Morgan—there is nothing on which to base the statement—“Joseph could find matter for meditation. Men could be moved by their religious beliefs as by no other means, for religious faith dignified and ennobled what it touched” (p. 275). It was at that juncture, according to Morgan, that “not folk magic, but religion should henceforth be his sphere” (p. 275). Morgan thinks it would be an easy thing for Joseph and Martin Harris to “rearrange their memories, perceive what was reality in the seeming reality, and substitute the reality for the seeming” (p. 275). We have Dale Morgan to thank for helping us to see that everyone who is a firsthand witness to these events was in a fundamental sense self-deceived!

Morgan reports Joseph Smith’s first meeting with Oliver Cowdery, using Cowdery’s history from the Messenger and Advocate. But, quick to cast doubt upon Cowdery’s story, Morgan turns to an obvious and clumsy forgery, Defense in a Rehearsal of My Grounds for Separating Myself from the Latter Day Saints.
Morgan gives credence to the story that “Cowdery . . . received baptism from Joseph’s hand, ‘by the direction of the Angel of God, whose voice, as it has since struck me, did most mysteriously resemble the voice of Elder Sidney Rigdon, who, I am sure had no part in the transactions of that day, as the Angel was John the Baptist, which I doubt not and deny not’” (p. 392). Could Morgan have been unaware that no known press existed in Norton, Ohio, when this was supposedly published?75

When considering the testimony of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, Morgan fell back on the favorite line from Mark Twain, “‘I could not feel more satisfied and at rest if the entire Whitmer family had testified’” (p. 304). This deals neatly with the witnesses, but does not address a single issue of exactly what they saw. Morgan relates the yarn from Thomas Ford that the witnesses saw only an empty box and that Joseph forced them to pray “for more than two hours” until “they were now persuaded that they saw the plates” (p. 304). Like Fawn Brodie,76 Morgan narrows Ford’s tale to the eight witnesses, but Ford himself does not limit it in that way. Morgan does not indicate exactly how Thomas Ford, and Ford alone, could have come across this valuable information, and he is persuaded by the story without any corroboration. Morgan also ignores hundreds of pages of testi-

75 Morgan seems naive and uncritical. According to Richard L. Anderson, “Not only does Cowdery have no 1839 connection with the place of publication; not only does the supposed location have no known press—but also no known original of this pamphlet has been found. It came from an anti-Mormon organization in 1906 with the fanfare of a new discovery, but was totally unmentioned in Oliver Cowdery’s lifetime in Mormon publications (which typically refuted attacks in this period) or non-Mormon publications (which would not have passed up the printed renunciation of the key assistant to Joseph Smith). Furthermore, when Oliver returned to the Church and was closely questioned on what he had published about Mormonism while out of the Church, the above item was not ever named.’ Richard L. Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 172. Morgan never hints at the late publication date, preferring to cite the supposed 1839 publication date. The editor’s note generously concedes that there “is some question among scholars whether this document, which can only be traced to 1906, is legitimate” (p. 392 n. 20).

mony from David Whitmer, who told a remarkably consistent story throughout his life.\(^{77}\)

Morgan also claims that Joseph engaged in "unabashed hocus-pocus" and a "sustained sleight-of-hand performance" for eighteen months while writing the Book of Mormon (p. 278). What exactly constitutes "hocus-pocus" Morgan does not explain.\(^{78}\) It may be that he had nothing other than Fawn Brodie's explanation in mind when borrowing her words. Nevertheless it does nothing to explain how Joseph was able to produce the large and complex Book of Mormon.

Admittedly, though, Morgan does not see the Book of Mormon as especially complex. It is, for him, a history of "a white-skinned and delightful folk, the Nephites, and a savage race, the Lamanites, cursed by the Lord with a dark skin" (pp. 280–81). Careful readers of the Book of Mormon will notice the subtle changes from the actual text of the Book of Mormon. Nephites are described as "white and delightful," with nothing being said specifically about their skin, while Lamanites are described as being cursed with a skin of blackness (2 Nephi 5:21).\(^{79}\) Morgan no doubt believed that this was meant to function as an explanation for the color of the Indian's skin. Morgan also apparently subscribes to something like a hemispheric model of Book of Mormon geography, claiming that "their battlefields [were] still marked by great mounds the length and breadth of the Mississippi Valley" (p. 281). Morgan is never more specific than this on the question of Book of Mormon geography. Unfortunately for Morgan's theory, the Book of Mormon makes no reference at all to the Mississippi Valley or to the moundbuilders.

Morgan explained the Book of Mormon as having "evolved naturally from the circumstances of Joseph Smith's growing up,\(^{77}\) See Anderson, Investigating the Book of Mormon, 159–61. Anderson traces the way in which Thomas Ford's account has improved with the telling. Anyone serious about confronting the testimony of the witnesses, and not merely dismissing them, should consult Cook, David Whitmer Interviews, and David Whitmer, An Address to All Believers in Christ (Richmond, MO: Privately Printed, 1887).

\(^{78}\) See Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 85.

\(^{79}\) Morgan ignores 3 Nephi 2:15, which indicates that "their skin became white like unto the Nephites." This is the last reference in the Book of Mormon to skin that is not animal skin.
the world he lived in, his interests and his needs” (p. 310).80
“The cultural environment,” Morgan assured us, “was . . . so rich
in suggestion that the idea may have occurred to him independ­
ently. We will never be sure, for Joseph himself would never
acknowledge that anything but the power of God entered into the
writing of his book” (p. 310). Again, like Brodie, Morgan was
confident that View of the Hebrews influenced Joseph and quoted
extensively from it.81 Morgan did not note the vast number of
differences between the Book of Mormon and View of the
Hebrews.82 While Ethan Smith found the seemingly popular Ten
Tribes theory of Indian origin convincing, the Book of Mormon
is resolutely silent on the Ten Tribes. Morgan noted that “both
books quoted extensively and almost exclusively from Isaiah”
(p. 312) but failed to note that they quote quite different passages
and that the Book of Mormon quotes far more extensively from
Isaiah. (It is also true that the Book of Mormon, contrary to
Morgan’s assertion, also quotes from other portions of the Bible.)

Morgan was, however, cautious to hedge his bets on View of
the Hebrews as a source for the Book of Mormon. “As impressive
as are the parallels . . .,” he said, “we need not insist upon them”
(p. 313). The reason was that “the ideas common to the two

80 See Brodie, No Man Knows My History, 69.
81 Unfortunately, Morgan made no footnote at this critical point. He had
access to Brodie’s copy of B. H. Roberts’s “Parallel,” and that is the likely
source for this quotation, although Morgan examined, at one point, the 1825
edition of View of the Hebrews. The quotation can be found in Brigham D.
Madsen, ed., Studies of the Book of Mormon (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois
Press, 1985), 332-33. I have been unable to locate the lines in question in the
1823 edition of View of the Hebrews, which would tend to weaken Morgan’s case
(because Joseph was more likely to have had access to the 1823 edition and
apparently was already talking about the Book of Mormon before 1825). By the
same token, the greatly enlarged 1825 edition contained more material and hence
is the preferred source for those attacking the Book of Mormon. The large
amount of additional material in the 1825 edition is seldom, if ever, mentioned.
The lack of a footnote may indicate that Morgan was reluctant to cite his actual
source. B. H. Roberts’s “Parallel” traveled unofficially through the Mormon
underground for many years before finally being published in 1985.
82 For a short and concise study on the difficulties of the Ethan Smith the­
ory, see “View of the Hebrews: ‘An Unparallel.’” in Reexploring the Book of
Mormon, ed. John W. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992),
83-87.
books” were “the common property of their generation” (p. 313). This is a common bit of begging the question on Morgan’s part which lets nothing whatever count against his theory.83

Morgan makes the common mistake of claiming that the plates “had been hidden away in the Hill Cumorah” (p. 314).84 It is indicative of his less than careful reading of the Book of Mormon that he claims that, “driven northward by their relentless enemies, the Nephites had built the great mounds of the Mississippi and Ohio valleys” (p. 314). Morgan thus “solved the mystery of the mound builders” (p. 314). Again, unfortunately, the word “mound” does not occur in the Book of Mormon, neither does anything that would indicate the Mississippi or the Ohio.

Although it did not make it into his book, Morgan at one time entertained the popular notion that “part of the original appeal of the Book of Mormon was the anti-Masonic sentiment permeating it.”85 There was no need for Morgan to have been so coy with his assertion since No Man Knows My History contained an extensive elaboration of “Gadiantont Masonry” in the Book of Mormon.86 Once again, however, either Morgan or Brodie should have checked to see if anyone in the 1830s read Masonry into the Book of Mormon. Although many saw the fullness of the Gospel in the Book of Mormon, as we do today, there does not seem to be anyone who joined the Church saying, “thank goodness, in the Book of Mormon I have finally found the perfect expression of my anti-Masonry.”87

84 Mormon 6:6 indicates that Mormon “hid up in the hill Cumorah all the records which had been entrusted to me by the hand of the Lord, save it were these few plates which I gave unto my son Moroni.” These are the plates of the Book of Mormon. Moroni does not indicate where he hid “the plates of Nephi.”
87 Susan Easton Black’s Stories from the Early Saints: Converted by the Book of Mormon (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1992) documents the way in which some early Saints read the Book of Mormon. There is exactly nothing of mound-
Unfortunately, Morgan did not know that, even as he wrote the line “the most anachronistic feature of the book was the introduction into it of Christian themes,” the great libraries of the Qumran community were being discovered, with all their seeming Christian overtones.88 “Long before the time of Christ, the Nephites, as Joseph developed their story, believed in him as the Redeemer, worshipped in his name and even sought to be reconciled to the Father through an atonement yet to be made” (p. 317). All of this sounds remarkably similar to the unquestionably ancient documents discovered at Qumran.

Morgan concludes his analysis of the Book of Mormon saying,

The eminently personal character of the Book of Mormon extends far beyond its incidental revelation of Joseph’s lack of learning. In a sense it is a truer autobiography than the formal account he later gave the world, for quite unconsciously it mirrors his mind, both its quality and the character of its ideas and interests. The absorption of his society in the mystery of the moundbuilders and the origin of the American Indians, its rapt interest in folk magic, the periodic interruption of its religious anxieties and ecstasies, its naive assurance in the divinely ordained future of America, all are presented in Joseph’s book with as much assurance as the cracker-barrel sage of any village store. If all this, which gave flesh and blood to a fictional history designed to be read as living history, was received with conviction, it was because he brought to it an elemental simplicity which returned all controversies to the ultimate authority of the scriptures. (p. 318)

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88 There is, of course, an extraordinarily large literature on this subject. See, for example, Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, ed. John W. Welch, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 193–98; 265–74.
Morgan simply misread the Book of Mormon—it gives no explanation of the moundbuilders of the Mississippi and Ohio and no hard and fast explanation of the origin of the American Indians. In all of this, and in forcing the Book of Mormon to "mirror Joseph's mind," Morgan was following the trail blazed by Fawn Brodie, with very little of his own to add.

The Influence of On Early Mormonism

Dale Morgan’s unfinished history has had little, if any, influence in the community of those who know or care about Mormon history. No one cites On Early Mormonism as an authority for some opinion on Joseph Smith. Morgan was wrong about the questions he thought he had settled definitively. There may be those who regret that Morgan was unable to finish his Mormon history and hence may regard it as a loss. However this may be, Morgan’s greatest influence lies in his correspondence. I am told by those running the Special Collections at the University of Utah that the Madeline Reeder McQuown collection is among the most frequently used. By contrast, Fawn Brodie’s papers are kept in storage and must be requested one day before their desired use. I seriously doubt that those who are interested in Brigham Young paw through McQuown’s papers looking for clues into her “amazing” research into Brother Brigham. I have no doubt that cultural Mormons still find solace in the studied and dogmatic unbelief of Dale Morgan, and this no doubt accounts for at least some of the popularity of the McQuown and Morgan Collections.

Still, part of the Morgan myth is that his unfinished history would have been one to have been reckoned with. But, by the standards of the times in which we find ourselves, it is outdated. Dale Morgan spent his entire life digging through libraries and archives. His deafness denied him distractions like radio and television, which limit the intellectual activities of others. Yet in all the


90 It is only stretching the truth a little to claim that Dale Morgan did all the research for that book.
years of archival research Morgan was never able to turn up a single item which touched Joseph Smith's story.91

John Phillip Walker, as well as Gary Topping and a few others, promote the myth that Morgan was unable to finish his great work "because of a protracted series of sidetracks."92 But this simply cannot, in all honesty, be accepted at face value. Morgan could turn out books and articles on the less challenging American Western history at astonishing rates (especially considering that he worked without the benefit of a computer). Morgan was unable to finish his history of Mormonism, in part at least, because he was never able to deal satisfactorily with Joseph's visions and with the Book of Mormon. Despite his confident talk, and overlooking the technical flaws, Morgan's environmental explanation has something fundamentally unsatisfactory about it. And Morgan may have sensed it.

Concluding Unscientific Postscript: Notes Toward a Cautionary Tale on the Soft Underbelly of Cultural Mormonism

If, as I believe I have demonstrated, what Morgan's editor calls "The History" is anything but the definitive treatment of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon—not to mention the entire sweep of Mormon history, which is what he wanted to write for most of his adult life—is there something of value in Dale Morgan on Early Mormonism? As I have indicated, this book consists of both the sketchy early chapters for what Morgan hoped to be the definitive history of the Mormon past and a rather good collection of his vast correspondence. If Morgan failed to write the definitive naturalistic account of Joseph Smith and the Book of Mormon, if

91 This is not to say that the Saints as a whole, in 1945, had not lapsed into forgetfulness about things like seerstones. Seerstones are, nevertheless, part of Joseph Smith's telling of his own story.
what he did write now seems badly flawed, can something be salvaged from his correspondence?

Dale Morgan wrote to Bernard DeVoto and wryly noted that “we have three people sitting in our sanity commission and can quarrel amiably among ourselves (comforted by the knowledge that regardless of our findings, few people will ever find out about them and fewer still give a damn)” (p. 106). It is one of the ironies of Morgan’s own history that this prophecy has failed. Dale Morgan kept virtually all of his own correspondence and the correspondence he received. It is not stretching the truth to say that among the various collections of papers deposited in libraries and historical societies along the Wasatch Front lie the materials from which could be written the history of early cultural Mormonism.

Such a history would necessarily include, if we followed D. Michael Quinn and Brodie, details of the personal lives of those involved on the fringes of the Church. It seems impolite to insist on an “intimate” history of people like Dale Morgan and Fawn Brodie, and, no doubt, some of that history would be unseemly. An intellectual history would be more tasteful and better serve the interests of comity. The two histories, however, cannot be told separately, as if one had nothing to do with the other.

Those who are the intellectual children and stepchildren, and in some cases stepgrandchildren, of Brodie and Morgan should also have pause to reflect. The fringes of cultural Mormonism have become increasingly radical in the last few years, promoting a variety of ideologies and “isms.” There can be little doubt that some future historian will dig through the letters, memos, and e-mail left behind by this group. Destroying the documents seems to have little effect; if Madeline Reeder McQuown thought she could censor Dale Morgan by destroying his letters, she did not stop to consider that Morgan kept a copy of virtually everything he sent her. Other copies of correspondence show up in curious places—in the papers of Fawn Brodie, Stan Ivins, and Juanita Brooks, to name only a few.

I have no doubt that this future history will take into account all the sorts of things that historians like D. Michael Quinn just love to talk about. It will be meaty and earthy and will attempt to get at “the man” (or woman, as the case may be). The first hints at the course such a history of cultural Mormonism might take are
just starting to appear. The story is likely to be enlightening, embarrassing and, in an ironic way, faith-promoting, all at the same time.

Reviewed by Kay P. Edwards

This set of audio tapes requires approximately three hours of listening time—a significant commitment that might better be spent with the Book of Mormon itself. That said, however, the tapes may be somewhat useful to certain individuals. They are likely to be of more value to a neophyte Book of Mormon reader than to someone who has already taken the time to read, study, and ponder the book itself. Their benefit will be limited by the listener’s previous experience with the Book of Mormon (an inverse relationship) and level of patience and motivation in plowing through the “chaff” of Dr. Ludlow’s presentation to get to the “wheat” (a direct relationship).

Dr. Ludlow’s presentation is built around eight major topics relative to the Book of Mormon: An overview of what it is and is not, the book’s author (Jesus Christ), the various sets of plates mentioned in the book, the engravers of the plates, the book’s prophets, its peoples, its purposes, and general do’s and don’ts to follow when studying it. The presentation is technically satisfactory. Dr. Ludlow enunciates clearly and has a pleasant voice. The tapes appear to have been recorded during a series of lectures given by Dr. Ludlow.

Dr. Ludlow is a noted authority on the Book of Mormon, and the title of the recording raised my expectations about the content to a degree that wasn’t met. An excessive amount of the content seemed more motivational than instructional. The useful nuggets of helpful information were scattered throughout the presentation, and I had to be very attentive not to miss them. I particularly liked Dr. Ludlow’s suggestions of ways readers can relate the scriptures to themselves. I found his recommendation that we not worry about trying to prove the Book of Mormon to others or about how to deal with critical challenges to it both practical and
straightforward. It is advice that anyone reviewing anti-Book of Mormon literature might well keep in mind.

My primary criticisms of the tapes begin with the tedium of listening to them for the extended periods of time required to get anything from the experience. It seemed impossible to listen to more than one side at any one sitting. It was difficult to keep my attention focused for the forty-five minutes required to listen to each side, and the soothing qualities of Dr. Ludlow’s voice lulled me to sleep before the end of each forty-five minute segment the first time I listened to the tapes. For both these reasons, plus the fact that each side is not self-contained in its message, I found it difficult to follow the thread of the entire presentation from beginning to end. The second time I listened to the tapes, I took detailed and copious notes of the entire presentation—still, however, in forty-five minute sittings. The notes helped, but why not just have the content in print to begin with?

The major difficulty is the organization, or perhaps more accurately the disorganization, of the content. The major points of help to a reader of the Book of Mormon get lost in the numerous digressions, references to extraneous material, and multiple lists within lists. If all the extraneous content were omitted, the listening time would be reduced to a manageable thirty—or at most sixty—minutes and the value of the content would be enhanced enormously.

The content that contributes little if anything to preparing the listener to get the most from the Book of Mormon includes (1) the recitation of Dr. Ludlow’s credentials, which could be printed on the packaging materials; (2) the review of discouraging Church survey results about Book of Mormon readership experience among Church members and the excuses given by people for not reading it; (3) the numerous quotations of prophetic admonition to read the scriptures, especially the Book of Mormon (one or two would suffice to make the point that it is important to study the Book of Mormon and to provide specific reasons why). And (4) the detailed recitations of page numbers and numbers of pages, the sequential naming of books in the Book of Mormon, and the repetitive references to the sealed portion of the plates received by the Prophet Joseph Smith for translation are interesting trivia as a time-filler, but add nothing to the listener’s percep-
tive study of the Book of Mormon and are some of the most serious barriers to following Dr. Ludlow’s avowed purpose and self-declared theme.

Other elements also caused me some irritation. One is the sometimes parochial orientation (the tapes are addressed to “Brothers and Sisters” and references to communism or commu-nistic countries, along with a definite bias toward a United States perspective) at a time when Church membership is increasing worldwide¹ and interest in the Book of Mormon is growing among non-Church members. Another irritation is the tendency by Dr. Ludlow to make statements of personal conclusions he has drawn from his reading of the Book of Mormon as if they are factual rather than just plausible. His interpretations may be reasonable, but others might be equally valid based on the same evidence or lack thereof. (For example, Dr. Ludlow suggests that the reason there are so few pages in the Book of Mormon concerning the extended periods of time between the books of Jacob and Mosiah and between the books of 3 Nephi and Mormon is that the almost total wickedness of the people during the first period and their almost total righteousness during the second made a more extensive record unnecessary.) Another annoyance is the frequent digressions from the major points of the presentation into collateral material. These may be of some interest, but they rarely increase the listener’s understanding of the Book of Mormon. For me, this aspect is the greatest weakness of this taped presentation. It could easily prevent anyone but the most devoted and discerning listener from gaining serious benefit from the tapes. On the other hand, this content may make listening to the tapes during a daily exercise routine more entertaining.

Generally, I found this taped presentation by Dr. Ludlow to have some useful ideas that may enhance a listener’s experience in reading the Book of Mormon. However, it requires careful listening and rigorous editing to avoid getting lost in the superfluous material and to focus in on the content that will truly help listeners get more from their study of the Book of Mormon. Even then,

however, much more is required than the content of these tapes to help a reader "get the most from the Book of Mormon." "The most" comes only by reading, studying, pondering, and praying about the Book of Mormon, followed by receiving confirmation and enlightenment from the Holy Ghost. I would save the $13.95 and use the three hours to become personally involved with the Book of Mormon.

Reviewed by Gary P. Gillum

In the world of words and scholarship few men are respected as much as the lexicographers and lexicologists who persevere with the daunting task of compiling dictionaries, concordances, and indexes. They are largely unsung heroes whose patience and diligence are little understood by others, but at the same time are appreciated because of the scholarly usefulness of the tools they compile. Their work seems to be the opposite of most scholars, who attempt to bring the chaos of individual words into the order of language and of a new creative work. They can best be described in a reflection by the dean of all lexicographers, James Murray, the compiler of *The Oxford English Dictionary* (OED):

> How often does man hairsplit, and sever, and part asunder what Heaven has made a whole! . . . Man is fond to classify, to separate, to discriminate, to set apart in little cells of memory the mass of facts he gathers from the field of nature.\(^1\)

Eldin Ricks has also followed this lexicological tradition by parting “asunder what Heaven has made a whole,” but his effort began when computer technology enabled him to do so more readily. *Eldin Ricks’s Thorough Concordance of the LDS Standard Works* was begun in 1971 as a database that resulted not only in this present work, but also served as the basis for the *Topical Guide to the Scriptures of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, for *LDS View*, and for other recent concordances which are available in electronic formats. But unlike the computer databases, this concordance is portable and can be taken any-

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where—and without being turned on. As a reference librarian, I recall the initial enthusiasm my colleagues and I felt several years ago when databases and CD-ROM products began to solve many of our research dilemmas in the Harold B. Lee Library. Unfortunately, as the software continued to proliferate and the hardware became overburdened, both librarian and researcher increasingly returned to the books as being faster and easier to use. This may seem like going back in time to the Luddite frenzies of one hundred years ago or seem to be an answer to the Unabomber’s concerns, but in fact it is a course correction seeking balance between the ease of traditional research tools and the power of electronic formats.

When FARMS first gave me a copy of the book to review, I immediately took it to my office and made room for it on the shelf next to George Reynolds’s *A Complete Concordance of the Book of Mormon*. It seemed only natural to do so, for the Reynolds volume was the first Latter-day Saint reference book I ever purchased and has served me well both personally and as a librarian at the reference desk. I then began to compare the two books “thoroughly” and to talk about this new tool with my colleagues, one of whom was in the process of writing a review on George Reynolds.² Ricks’s book will become at least equal in stature to that of Reynolds’s concordance and will probably replace it, given that it includes all three Latter-day Saint scriptures, and not just the Book of Mormon. Moreover, John Bluth’s *Concordance to the Doctrine and Covenants*,³ compiled in the 1930s, is out of print, along with Lynn M. Hilton’s *A Concordance of the Pearl of Great Price*.⁴ In 1977 R. Gary Shapiro compiled *An Exhaustive Concordance of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price,*⁵ having completed it in four years with the aid of a computer. With Shapiro’s

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² See Bruce Van Orden’s review of Reynolds’s *Book of Mormon Dictionary*, in this issue, pages 51–60.
compact work out-of-print, however, Ricks’s concordance is now the only one to bring the three Latter-day Saint standard works together. In addition, Ricks’s *Concordance* is the only one based on the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, and Pearl of Great Price.

Each of these compilers has left out common words that are not necessary for the average reader and student of the scriptures. Those who wish to do word studies are encouraged to use computer databases. But Reynolds included one detail everyone else missed—a short definition of proper names at the beginning of the list (e.g., “Abinadi: A Nephite prophet, whom the Lord raised up to reprove the wicked people of King Noah for their sins. He was burned to death in the city of Lehi-Nephi about B.C. 150.”)

Like all concordances preceding his, Ricks’s concordance suffers from not having a little more order within each word list. Whether done by hand or by computer, these lists must necessarily list all appearances of a word in some kind of order. The order found in *Ricks’s Concordance* is by book in the Book of Mormon and Pearl of Great Price and by section in the Doctrine and Covenants. This method makes it impossible to separate the many instances of “great” from a few instances of “Great Britain.” Or to separate “young” from “Brigham Young,” “smith” from “Joseph Smith,” and “snow” from “Lorenzo Snow.” It is a tedious process to separate the apples from the oranges. On the other hand, it is still a researcher’s joy to be able to see the usage of words in our three Latter-day Saint scriptures.

I need once again to invoke the thoughts of James Murray, words which just as easily could have been uttered by Eldin Ricks or George Reynolds, both of whom faithfully labored for twenty-one years on their projects:

> I never could have stood the work that I have done at the Dictionary, and the special difficulties which threatened at times to overwhelm me without earnest prayer every morning for help to do my work. . . . And many a time, unknown to anybody, . . . when absolutely at the end of my own resources in dealing with entangled & difficult words, when all alone at night in the Scriptorium, I have shut the door, and thrown myself on the floor absolutely on God’s help, and
asked him to use me as an instrument to do what He knew to be right; and I believe I have never asked in vain.⁶

All these men would surely hope that we as students of the scriptures would be equal to the results of their laborious work, faith, sacrifice, and reliance on the Spirit for help and guidance.

Reviewed by Chris Crowe

A circular gold label on the cover of *Tennis Shoes and the Feathered Serpent* announces: “The Tennis Shoes Adventure Series: Over 150,000 Copies Sold!” This gold-faced proclamation of the series’ success jaded envious old me from the outset. Even though I had enjoyed the first book of this (so far) three-book series, I decided I would not like this one. Popular pulp. Can’t be any good if it has this much appeal in such a narrow market.

And so I began my search for reasons not to like this Book of Mormon/time travel/historical novel. And I found some: an overreliance on clichés, an academic faux pas (referring to the chair of BYU’s Anthropology Department as a dean), calling a *Post-It* note a “stick ’em note,” and insensitively referring to a black character as a “Negro.” But the reader/writer in me soon overlooked these flaws—minor flaws that should have been detected and corrected by Covenant’s editors—because I was caught up in the fast-paced plot. Heimerdinger knows how to write a page-turner and has done it again in this third volume of the *Tennis Shoes* series. Its appeal is doubled for Latter-day Saint readers because of its successful blending of adventure fiction with Book of Mormon fact.

Jim Hawkins is again the central character in this historical fantasy. Now a forty-year-old widower with three children, Jim has nearly forgotten his earlier Tennis Shoes time-travel adventures. But evil Jacob of the Moon, a.k.a. Boaz, has time-traveled from Book of Mormon times through the Frost Cave to frame Jim for homicide, to kidnap his oldest daughter Melody, and to return with her to Book of Mormon times. His plan is to use Melody to coerce Garth Plimpton (Jim’s old friend, recent brother-in-law, and fellow time traveler) into revealing information that will give Jacob’s Gadianton clan power to overwhelm the forces of righteousness.
With the help of a Nephite and a future girlfriend, Jim escapes from the jail in Salt Lake City and sets out with his remaining two children on an exciting adventure to Mesoamerica in the year 1 B.C. to battle corrupt Nephites and Lamanites and to rescue Melody and Garth from the clutches of the Gadianton gang.

As in the previous Tennis Shoes books, Heimerdinger carefully weaves Book of Mormon fact into his story. At times, though, he gives more Book of Mormon exposition/background than is necessary for this story and this audience. The only other disappointment I had as a reader was the discovery, after I was swept up in Jim's adventure, that this is only Book One of this tale. Things are really heating up for Jim and his friends when the novel comes to an abrupt and disappointing end: “Our adventure in the land and time of the Feathered Serpent had only just begun” (p. 329).

In sum, though, this is an entertaining, fast-paced, well-told adventure story, one certain to appeal to Latter-day Saint readers—even to readers as jaded and envious as I am.


Reviewed by Deborah Farmer

Clair Poulson, a Duchesne County sheriff turned novelist, has recently produced two adventure books for young adults set in the tumultuous days of Captain Moroni and the first Gadianton robbers. The publisher, Covenant, has since made these works available as “condensed novels on tape.” Reviewing books on tape presented the distinct challenge of assessing both the quality of the books (though I had only one of the texts for comparison purposes) and the quality of the taped narration to determine their independent and combined effectiveness.

Clair Poulson’s first young adult novel, *Samuel, Moroni’s Young Warrior*, begins in the midst of Lamanite attacks upon the Nephites—roughly Alma 43. Samuel is a young Nephite who helps free his city from captivity and later—with the help of Gadoni, a young Lamanite war-prisoner turned convert—is instrumental in ridding the land of Lamanite aggression. *Samuel, Gadianton’s Foe* opens a few years later with the murder of the chief judge, Pahoran. Samuel and Gadoni, both with young families now, are again forced into action as the land of Nephi is threatened by the emerging Gadianton robbers. The scriptural time frame for this book is Helaman 1:9–2:13.

*Samuel, Gadianton’s Foe* is quite obviously the second of the two novels, for it is superior to its prequel in almost every regard. While both are imaginative, fast-paced adventures, the second book reaches a level of depth and human drama that the first book never does. The dilemmas are more layered, the solutions less obvious, the trials more personal—and everything doesn’t always turn out all right in the end. For example, while women in the first novel are employed primarily as rescuable love objects
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whose beauty is at times a useful decoy, they thankfully play a more prominent and complex role in Samuel, Gadianton's Foe. A particularly well-developed scene involves the reactions and subsequent actions of a group of women abducted into the wilderness to become the robbers' wives. Poulson provides this issue and other equally meaty issues, such as child and spouse abuse and the witnessing of a loved one's death, with more time and care than would be expected in a typical young adult adventure story.

Both novels follow chronologies found in the Book of Mormon; and because Poulson roots Samuel's story in specific events and characters from the Book of Mormon, a basic familiarity with this scripture is required for full comprehension. The books are most appropriate for and would probably be best enjoyed by early adolescents (ages 12–15). However, proficient younger readers and interested older ones could likewise find this enjoyable reading. The tapes make the stories only slightly more accessible to younger or less fluent readers, as will be addressed later.

Poulson's tales are overtly filled with such prominent Mormon themes as learning to love one's enemies, exercising the power of prayer, following the promptings of the Holy Ghost, "doing unto others," discerning and choosing good over evil, "standing for truth and righteousness," finding an eternal companion, and trusting God. Today's Mormon youth will readily recognize the language and phrasings of these messages as the same as that which they hear each week in Sunday School and seminary. In Poulson's story, Samuel grows up hearing the same admonitions as today's Latter-day Saint youth. Samuel, like every youth, is forced to test the strength of his moral character, but with challenges unique to his life and time. Can he forgive and befriend a Lamanite who fought against his people? Young adult Mormon literature, by presenting consistent core beliefs in a variety of contexts, can help adolescents understand the cross-century and cross-cultural applicability of God's commandments. They can see how other young people dealt with tough situations armed with the same beliefs.

As with the stories themselves, the taped narrative quality of Samuel, Gadianton's Foe is superior to that of Samuel, Moroni's Young Warrior. I admit that when I first popped the latter into my
reading of the book, condensed to fit onto two 90-minute cassettes. The story is read rapidly and quite dispassionately, and at times I could hear the fatigue of a narrator who had been reading a bit too long. Done properly, audio versions of literature—especially children’s/young adult literature—can be an exciting and legitimate medium for both entertainment and pedagogical purposes. As a child, I was reared on Mind’s Eye tapes, record versions of Disney movies, and Golden Books on tape, all of which employed the fundamental storytelling techniques of distinguishable, animated voices and dramatic pauses. These recordings enhanced the stories and enticed me to read the books on my own. I could find no pedagogical benefits to listening to the cassette version of Poulson’s first novel nor any entertainment value that would make listening preferable to reading the book. For example, the cassette version of the first novel does not make the book more accessible to young readers, for reasons mentioned earlier; and the condensed format isn’t conducive to read-along activities for older, nonproficient readers who could benefit from audio-reinforcement while reading. The tapes are, instead, simply a substitute for those people who don’t feel like reading the book. In short, when publishers treat children’s/young adult literature on tape as uncreatively as they do adult books on tape, we all lose a powerful instructive and entertainment tool.

That said, I’ll quickly add that the cassette version of *Samuel, Gadianton’s Foe* is superior in both the quality and pace of narration; those children in the upper-elementary school grades who are unable to read the book fluently would find this tape set both accessible and entertaining.

Before listening to the tapes of *Samuel, Moroni’s Young Warrior* and *Samuel, Gadianton’s Foe*, I wrestled with very mixed feelings about using the Book of Mormon, a sacred text, as fodder for fiction. While I’ve not completely resolved these misgivings, I have come to regard this type of historical fiction as more honorable than the ever-popular dramatizations of scriptural stories, which often instead become fictionalizations in entertainment’s sacred name. Poulson’s openly fictional stories offer an imaginative door into the history and lessons of the Book of Mormon (without tampering with the sacred), and provide some enjoyable reading/listening along the way.
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About the Reviewers

Terry B. Ball earned a Ph.D. in botany from Brigham Young University and is assistant professor of ancient scripture at that institution.

Chris Crowe received his Ed.D. degree in English education from Arizona State. He is currently an associate professor of English at Brigham Young University.

Kay P. Edwards earned a Ph.D. in consumer economics from Cornell University. She is emeritus professor of family sciences at Brigham Young University.

Deborah Farmer is currently a sophomore at Boston University working toward a B.S. in elementary education and a B.A. in English.

Gary P. Gillum, M.L.S., is religion and ancient studies librarian at Brigham Young University.

LeIsle Jacobson has a B.S. degree from Brigham Young University. She is an online consultant in Tempe, Arizona.

John Wm. Maddox earned a J.D. degree from the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University. He is a former seminary teacher currently practicing law in Orem, Utah.

V. Garth Norman has an M.A. degree from Brigham Young University. He serves as director of Archaeological Research Consultants and research director of the Ancient America Foundation.

Gary F. Novak, M.A., administers the World Wide Web site at Rio Salado Community College in Arizona. He has taught computer
science and published several essays concerning the logic of explanation in the understanding of Mormon scripture and history.

Daniel C. Peterson earned a Ph.D. in Near Eastern languages and cultures from the University of California at Los Angeles and is associate professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University.

David Rolph Seely earned a Ph.D. in Near Eastern studies at the University of Michigan and is assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.

Bryan J. Thomas earned a B.A. degree in commercial art from Brigham Young University and is president of Thomas & Perkins, an advertising agency based in Denver.

Bruce A. Van Orden earned a Ph.D. in American, Mormon, and modern European history at Brigham Young University and is associate professor of Church history and doctrine at Brigham Young University.

Bruce W. Warren earned a Ph.D. from the University of Arizona at Tucson in anthropology and archaeology. He is president of the Ancient America Foundation.

Keith J. Wilson earned a Ph.D. at the University of Utah in educational administration and is assistant professor of ancient scripture at Brigham Young University.