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Constancy amid Change

Daniel C. Peterson

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Reviewed by Daniel C. Peterson

**Constancy amid Change**

Have I done any good in the world today?
Have I helped anyone in need? . . .
Doing good is a pleasure, a joy beyond measure,
A blessing of duty and love.¹

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* is a reprint of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism: The Truth about the Mormon Church*, by Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. John Weldon, which was first published in 1992.² Its copyright page notes the title change and features a new ISBN number, but is otherwise almost exactly identical to the corresponding page in the earlier printing. This printing is a rather silently revised edition. Its pagination is almost precisely what it was before. And its copyright date remains 1992.

In 1993, I published a lengthy and highly critical review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*, detailing scores of errors and distortions in that volume.³ So you can perhaps imagine my disappointment when it seemed that Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon had changed nothing of their book beyond its name. For example, they persist in demanding (on pp. 285–86) that Latter-day Saint scholars furnish examples of

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¹ “Have I Done Any Good?” *Hymns*, No. 223.
² The doubled “Dr.” before the name of John Weldon represents, as accurately as I can determine, the number of doctorates that he claims. See appendix 3.
Nephi te coin e, des pit e th e fa c t th a t n o t a si n gle verse of th e Book of Mo rm o n eve r men tions th e wo rd coin or a ny vari ant thereof. Furthermore, altho ugh I aler ted th e m to thi s error, th ey continue (on p. 479 n. 262) to cite, typically at second hand, a book by Orrin Porter Rockwell that th ey entitle Man of God, Son of Thunder. However, according to Harold Schindler’s biogra phy of th at interesting nineteenth-century Latter-day Saint, which bears th e title Orrin Porter Rockwell: Man of God, Son of Thunder, “Rockwell could not read or write.” 4 And th ey persevere (on pp. 285–86) in th eir tacit ultimatum that de fenders of the Book of Mo rm on locate, to th eir satisfaction, “th e plains of Nepaha.” If w e do not, th ey implicit ly propose, w e should yield up our claim that it records genuine history. (This despite th e fa c t that, as I poin ted out to th em th ree years ago, no such place is ever men tioned in the Book of Mo rm on.) In reusing old, discredited ma terial, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon ar e doing that which has been done in o th er anti-Mo rm on w ritings since th e pioneering days of Alexander Campbell (1831) and Philastus Hurlbut and Eber D. Howe (1834), whose works the y actually cite and promote in th eir book. (See app endix 1 for a par ticu larly entertaining exa mple of recyclin g effo rts by two o th er professional anti-Mo rm ons.)

But, as you have no doubt already been thinking to yourself, something must have changed, or the book would not be receiving yet another (albeit, this time, slightly briefer) review. And you are quite correct. A cursory scan of th e reprinting revealed that, de spite its 1992 copy right date, Behind the Mask of Mormonism ref ers to at least two bo oks that first appeared in 1993 and to four that were published in 1994 (p. 230; p. 480 nn. 1, 2, 4, 9, 11).

So Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon had made some changes, after all. 5 Indeed, it soon became apparent th at they had also included a new appendix designed, essentially, to respond to my review. Their comments therein appeared to confirm my ini tial judgment that they had not correcte d the mistakes I had

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5 As another example, compare pages 303–4 in the two books. There are many, many more veiled ch an ges, but it wou ld be tedious (and pointless) to try to locate all of them.
pointed out for them, for they give the distinct impression that they do not like me and that they did not like my review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism.* It was, they said, “unfounded,” “judicious,” full of “inaccurate comments and misinterpretations” and “incompetent claims and false arguments” (p. 480 n. 3). It was “deceptive,” too, and “misleading and condescending” (p. 451). Furthermore, it was “ad hominem” and “sarcastic” (p. 451; 480 n. 3). The bottom line, they reported, was that my vicious, lying, inept review had “proved nothing of substance” (p. 451).

“The Mormon church,” announce Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, “retains two central problems that continue to plague its credibility.” One of these, they say, is “its refusal to deal forthrightly with the persuasive arguments of critics within and without the church. . . . The deceptive review of this book by Mormon

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scholar Daniel C. Peterson . . . is a case in point” (p. 451). Darn. And here I thought I had done just that. I had devoted 86 pages to a laborious critique of their book, with 188 (often quite lengthy) footnotes. I had tried to deal seriously with the issues. But I had evidently failed. Failed miserably. And, in so failing, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon report to their readers, I effectively also discredited the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies. “In essence,” they say, “Mormons who won’t deal with historical and biblical facts is [sic] the real issue here” (p. 453).

1. The Changes

I could only hang my head in shame. Their refusal to take me seriously had, it would seem, been abundantly justified. I was unworthy of the company of civilized human beings, let alone of real scholars such as Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon. But then, a ray of light pierced my dark depression. Browsing through *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, I began to notice that, in fact, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon had paid attention to me after all. For instance, a quick survey of 40 of the misspellings and other obvious mechanical errors that I had noted in their book’s first printing reveals that fully 34 of those errors, exactly 85% of them, have been corrected.

Indeed, I soon discovered that it was not only typographical errors and weird spellings that had quietly been rectified in this reprinting. Permit me to share a few examples of what I have in mind:

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7 Emphasis deleted from the original.
8 Unfortunately, in the course of my survey I noticed errors that I had overlooked in the earlier printing, errors that have survived into this version. These include such little items as “principle” for “principal” (p. 29), “Milton V. Blackman, Jr.,” for “Milton V. Backman, Jr.” (p. 270), “L. S. T. Rasmussen” for “Ellis T. Rasmussen” (p. 300), and “Irving Hexam” for “Irving Hexham” (p. 459 n. 5). On page 480 n. 3, Ankerberg and Weldon complain that my first review implied that “a relatively few typographical, typesetter, and dictation-induced phonetic errors prove [their] scholarship is sloppy.” This is not true. I implied that a great many such errors prove their scholarship sloppy. And attributing mistakes to phonetic and dictation problems does not excuse their failure to proofread their work. Such inaccuracy would be marked down in an undergraduate student’s paper, to say nothing of a published book (especially in a second, heavily—if covertly—revised edition).
• My review criticized Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon for using Doctrine and Covenants 135:3 to demonstrate Joseph Smith's alleged boastfulness. They were, I said, apparently operating on the assumption that the author of the passage in question was Joseph Smith. But he was not. John Taylor wrote it. Now, in Behind the Mask of Mormonism (p. 52), John Taylor is identified as the author of Doctrine and Covenants 135.9

• Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon twice referred to the "mandatory tithing" required of members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. My review pointed out the falsity of their statement, and the word "mandatory" has been dropped from Behind the Mask of Mormonism. One of the altered passages now alludes to the Church's profiteering from the "faithful tithing" (which is not quite the same thing) of its dupes.10

• In their attempt to discredit the Latter-day Saint practice of baptism for the dead, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon described the early Christian sect known as the Marcionites, who also knew and practiced a form of the ordinance, as "pagan." But this, as I pointed out, is a flat historical untruth. Behind the Mask of Mormonism has dropped the charge of paganism against the Marcionites.11

• Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism complacently declared that "no biblical scholar considers Mormonism to be a Christian religion." I remarked that this was clearly untrue, since, at the very least, Latter-day Saint specialists on the Bible consider themselves to be Christians, and since, furthermore, many others presumably either agree with them or else have never given the question a moment's thought. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Weldon now inform their readers that "no conservative biblical scholar considers Mormonism to be a Christian religion"—which is a rather different proposition and may well

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9 Compare Peterson, "Chattanooga Cheapslot," 6; Everything/Behind the Mask, 52.
10 Compare Peterson, "Chattanooga Cheapslot," 6; Everything/Behind the Mask, 28 (compare 29), emphasis added.
11 Compare Peterson, "Chattanooga Cheapslot," 6–7; Everything/Behind the Mask, 240.
still be false. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon ridiculed the Book of Mormon for its silly story about snakes erecting hedges. I observed, however, that no such story occurs in the Book of Mormon, and that they had apparently dreamed it up themselves. It has now vanished from their book.

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon praised Charles Crane, one of their anti-Mormon colleagues, as “a college professor and expert on Mormon archaeology.” I pointed out that he is no expert at all, and now he has become merely “a college professor and author of The Bible and Mormon Scriptures Compared.” (Anyone who has read The Bible and Mormon Scriptures Compared can testify that this change represents a serious demotion.) Elsewhere, Crane has fallen from the exalted status of “an expert on Mormon archaeology” to being merely “a professor knowledgeable on Mormon archaeology.”

- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism claimed that “Some Mormons teach that ‘through baptism for the dead . . . the Mormons have saved more souls than Christ did when he died on the cross.’” But this is plainly ridiculous, since absolutely nobody can be saved without the atonement of Christ,

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12 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 6 n. 11; Everything/Behind the Mask, 376, emphasis added.
13 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 7; Everything/Behind the Mask, 302.
14 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 14–15; Everything/Behind the Mask, 263, 284. On Charles Crane and his credentials as a scholar of archaeology, see Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, vol. 4 (Mesa: Brownsworth, 1995), 95–127. A friend’s recent telephone conversation with him suggests, too, that “Dr.” Crane has read very, very little about Latter-day Saint scholarship on archaeological issues.
while many, having received baptism during their lifetimes, will be saved without baptism for the dead. The statement is absurd. A subset cannot be larger than its parent set. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s claim is rather like announcing that there are more dogs than there are mammals. I said so, and I also found their source for it—a third- or fourthhand retelling by hostile witnesses of a comment allegedly made by an anonymous Mormon—extremely dubious. *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, yielding ground but not quite willing to abandon completely so useful a weapon, now says that “some Mormons allegedly teach” this preposterous idea.15

• *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* had claimed that Joseph Smith’s final cry of “Oh Lord, my God,” uttered while jumping from the window of the Carthage Jail and just before his murder by a mob of anti-Mormons, was an “expression of unbelief.” I found this assertion incomprehensible, and thought it probably more indicative of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s deep disdain for everything connected with Mormonism than of Joseph Smith’s views. *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* now says that the exclamation was an “expression of surprise,” which seems equally untenable but at least has the minor merit that it does not directly contradict the obvious content of the cry itself.16

• Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon ridiculed the presence of the seemingly Greek names Timothy and Jonas in the Book of Mormon. I observed that they had not kept up with Latter-day Saint scholarship on this issue, and they have now, to their credit, dropped the matter without the slightest attempt at self-defense. (Indeed, without any hint that they ever brought the subject up in the first place.)17

• Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon once said that the existence of the words Alpha and Omega in the Book of Mormon proved it a fraud, since there was, they said, no Greek among the

15 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 20; Everything/Behind the Mask, 177.

16 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 28; Everything/Behind the Mask, 351.

17 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 52; Everything/Behind the Mask, 322.
purported Nephites. In my review, however, I pointed out that the
Book of Mormon is a translation and explained that translators
have wide latitude in choosing the vocabulary they will use to repre-
sent what they find in the text from which they are working. Alpha
and Omega have now disappeared without trace from
Behind the Mask of Mormonism.18

- The same principle applies to the word adieu, in Jacob
7:27, which Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon once thought to
be a conclusive refutation of the Book of Mormon’s antiquity,
since French (hah hah) did not exist in the sixth century before
Christ. Responding, I remarked that, of all the anti-Mormon argu-
ments I have come across (and they are legion), this certainly
ranks as one of the stupidest. Now, in Behind the Mask of Mor-
monism, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have forgotten all
about it.19 (As Saturday Night Live’s Miss Emily Litella would
have said, “Never mind!”)

- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism
thought the story of Nephi’s building a temple in the New World
ludicrously implausible. I showed that it was not, and Behind the
Mask of Mormonism has now abandoned the criticism. Nothing
remains to show that it was ever there.20

- Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon claimed in the earlier
printing of their book to see a contradiction between certain of the
Book of Mormon’s statements about the presence of gold and
silver and other precious materials in the Americas. I demon-
strated that there was no contradiction, and, quietly, the argument
has utterly vanished.21

Such alterations are especially fascinating, coming, as they
do, from a pair of writers who profess to be highly offended
by what they describe as “secret changes . . . in the Mormon

18 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 60; Everything/Behind
the Mask, 322.
19 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 60; Everything/Behind
the Mask, 322.
20 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 78–80; Everything/
Behind the Mask, 322.
21 Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsht,” 81–82; Everything/
Behind the Mask, 322.
These "corrections, additions, deletions, etc." in Latter-day Saint documents were, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon allege, "all . . . done without any indication or acknowledgement of such action" (p. 317). "There isn't a single LDS-produced standard work," they quote the late "Dr." Walter Martin as saying, "that hasn't undergone hundreds and even thousands of changes, additions, deletions, and corrections, many of which are much more than 'typographical' in nature, and all of which were done without indications or acknowledgement of the actions taken" (p. 305). "It is inconceivable" they declare, "that any bona fide church would permit the alteration of what it truly believed were divine scriptures, let alone alter them itself and then keep such misrepresentations secret" (p. 305).

Now, my review discussed these allegations of secret changes in Mormon texts, and I presented evidence to show that there has been no attempted cover-up on the matter. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have not troubled themselves to refute me; they have simply republished the same baseless accusations in *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* as if repetition equals proof. But if there is no reason in this regard to find the Mormons guilty of "subterfuge and deception" (p. 312), as our two friends kindly put it, what are we to say of the stealth-editing that we find in this new version of their accusatory book? What clearer illustration could one ask for of "changes, additions, deletions, and corrections . . . all . . . done without any indication or acknowledgement of such action"? And if Latter-day Saint leaders have, in some cases, altered their texts under the claimed inspiration of God, what of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, who furtively changed their book on the basis, it would seem, of a review that, they proclaim, "proved nothing of substance"?

2. Problems That Remain

Of course, even with their revisions this remains a stupefyingly bad book. It is one of the most uncharitable and unpleasant things I have ever read, worse by far even than most other anti-

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22 They devote pages 305–18 to an assault on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints over this issue.
Mormon writing. It is unrelentingly negative, unremittingly hostile, and not overly scrupulous in its methods of attack. I stand by my earlier review, and I reiterate it with respect to the book’s recent reappearance under the rather lurid new title *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon are upset about my “sarcastic and invective [sic] portrayal of this book as ‘bigoted, intolerant, ugly, incompetent and dishonest’” (p. 451). I must apologize. I did not mean to seem sarcastic. To set the record straight, let me define, as clearly and precisely and dispassionately as I am able to do, my serious, considered opinion of the book, even after its change of title and after the cosmetic alterations Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have made to small portions of its text: It is bigoted, intolerant, ugly, incompetent, and dishonest. It is an unexcelled illustration of the old maxim that bigotry consists in being certain of something one knows nothing about. My previous review, I think, establishes that quite conclusively, and Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon have made far too few changes to redeem what seems to me, frankly, a wretched specimen of fundamentalist Protestant hate literature.

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* continues to mislead its readers with palpable falsehoods, including assertions that “Mormon teaching [denies] God, Christ, salvation, the Bible, etc.” (p. 368), that Mormonism rejects “the blood atonement of Christ” (p. 199), that Mormons “attack” the Bible (p. 376) and even God himself (p. 119), and that Latter-day Saints look forward to “the Second Coming of the god Joseph Smith” with the same enthusiasm and doctrinal emphasis that they show for the return of the Savior Jesus Christ (p. 22). It continues flagrantly to distort the teaching of the Book of Mormon on plural marriage (p. 410). It continues to ignore Mormon scholarship, while loudly crowing that such scholarship does not exist (as at pp. 285, 294–95). It still implies, despite my informing its authors to the contrary, that the New World Archaeological Foundation at Brigham Young University was set up to prove the Book of Mormon, and insists that the Foundation has been a failure (pp. 289–90).24 Despite my detailed seventeen-page demonstration to the contrary, *Behind the

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24 I intend to treat this subject in some detail in an upcoming issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*. 
Mask of Mormonism still maintains, falsely, that Alma 7:10 is an incorrect prophecy that Jesus would be born in the city of Jerusalem (p. 364; cf. 353). It persists in baselessly slandering the Witnesses to the Book of Mormon, while taking no notice of the abundant evidence that confirms their integrity and supports their testimonies (pp. 295–99, 446). It continues to allege that Latter-day Saints are “hypocrites” (p. 382), “unethical” (p. 422; cf. 81, 86), and deceivers.25 It insists, still, on branding the leaders of the Church as liars.26 (The book’s motto, wherein it boasts that it covers absolutely everything about Mormonism—spanning the entire range “From Its Early Schemes to Its Modern Deceptions”—has now been brought from the back cover to the front.)27 Behind the Mask of Mormonism still insists on depicting the Latter-day Saints as idolaters (p. 154) and as pagans.28 It continues to defame devout Mormons, saying that their faith is motivated, essentially, by a mixture of greed for power (p. 29n) and ravenous sexual lust (pp. 151–52, 211). It continues to demean Latter-day Saint religious belief, terming it “bizarre” (p. 217) and dismissing it as the product, merely, of “a process of seemingly deliberate self-deception” (p. 99; cf. 300), or, alternatively, of “ignorance and conditioning” (p. 354). It relies, once again, on the testimony of discredited charlatans such as Ed Decker (pp. 250, 441–42)29 and the late Dee Jay Nelson (p. 316), as well as on hostile thirdhand gossip (p. 466 n. 117; cf. p. 307). It obstinately insists on leveling gratuitous charges of religiously motivated homicide against nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints (p. 391). It persists in comparing members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to the “Flat Earth Society” (p. 373),

26 See pages 13, 15, 90n, 102, 303, 312, 341, 362, 410, 412, 443, 446.
27 And, in the new, unchanged printing, it has been corrected. It no longer reads “From It’s [sic] Early Schemes to It’s [sic] Modern Deceptions.” Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapshot,” 4, had noted the earlier error.
and, less amusingly, to the murderous Manson family (pp. 391–94, 400–401) and even to Lucifer himself (p. 211).

Of course, Mormons should not feel singled out by their being linked with Satan. In the eyes of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, all religions that disagree with fundamentalist Protestantism seem to be satanic. Elsewhere, for instance, they define the faith of the world’s nearly one billion Muslims as “spiritistic” or “demonic,” and ignorantly describe Allah, the object of worship in Islam, as an evil, pagan deity. They are evidently unaware that


31 John Ankerberg and John Weldon, The Facts on Islam (Eugene: Harvest House, 1991), 9–12, 14, 18, 24, 33, 40n, 42–44. Even some of their fellow evangelicals know better than this. See, for instance, Norman L. Geisler and Abdul Saleeb, Answering Islam: The Crescent in the Light of the Cross (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1993), 13–15. Incidentally, although Allah has no necessary connection to paganism, it can be plausibly argued that the God preached by Ankerberg and Weldon does. From the days of the early “Apologists” Aristides of Athens (A.D. 140) and St. Justin Martyr (A.D. 155), hellenized Christians attempted to show that Christians worshipped the same God as their sophisticated pagan neighbors. This was also the position of the illustrious Origen of Alexandria. See G. L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics (London: SPCK, 1940), 63. On page 65, Prestige endorses that great Christian theologian’s own self-description: “Origen,” he writes, “and not the third-rate professors of a dying sophistry and nerveless superstition, stood in the true succession from Plato and Aristotle in the history of pure thought.” “For over a century,” says the noted historian Robert Wilken, “since the time when the Apologists first began to offer a reasoned and philosophical presentation of Christianity to pagan intellectuals, Christian thinkers had claimed that they worshipped the same God honored by the Greeks and Romans, in other words, the deity adored by other reasonable men and women. Indeed, Christians adopted precisely the same language to describe God as did pagan intellectuals. The Christian apologist Theophilus of Antioch described God as “ineffable . . . inexpressible . . . uncontainable . . . incomprehensible . . . inconceivable . . . incomparable . . . unteachable . . . immutable . . . inexpressible . . . without beginning because he was uncreated, immutable because he is immortal” (Ad Autolyicum I, 3–4). This view, that God was an immaterial, timeless, and impassable divine being, who is known through the mind alone, became a keystone of Christian apologetics, for it served to establish a decisive link to the Greek spiritual and intellectual tradition.” See Robert L. Wilken, The Christians as the Romans Saw Them (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 151. Such efforts to demonstrate that the Christian God was identical to the God of sophisticated paganism continued as long as there were pagans to impress—i.e., well into the fifth century—although
the word *Allāh* is closely related to the Hebrew word *Elohim*, and that it is simply the Arabic equivalent of the English word *God*. (It is so used throughout the Arabic Bible.) Thus Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, in denouncing the Muslims as heathenish devil-worshipers, also blithely condemn millions of their Arabic Christian brothers and sisters. So it is hardly surprising that, throughout, and despite my earlier protest, *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* continues to slander the faith of the Latter-day Saints as a form of satanism.

Still, to the extent that I have enabled Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon to recognize a few of their grosser errors and worst arguments, and to replace them with others perhaps not quite so shoddy, I am pleased. They didn’t thank me on their dedication page, it is true. I can honestly say, though, that I don’t mind that. And I am not bitter about their failure to offer me any financial compensation for my editorial services to them. I am happy to have been of assistance. I only wish I could have helped much more.

Indeed, I should like, here, to offer a few suggestions that they might want to incorporate into the next printing of this book, when it will presumably come out with an even less subtle title than the one it now bears (perhaps something along the lines of *How to Profit from Whipping Up Hatred and Contempt for the Evil, Stupid Mormon Deceivers*):

- Since they have established my unspeakable nastiness beyond dispute, it might now be useful for the tender-hearted Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon to turn to the actual issues that I raised. “Although Peterson is skilled in *ad hominem* reviews,”

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it seems that the majority of early rank-and-file Christians deeply distrusted the attempts of these intellectuals to clothe Christianity in the garments of pagan Greek philosophy. See Wilken, *The Christians as the Romans Saw Them*, 78-79, 151-52, 154. Nonetheless, this hellenized deity is the God of the classical creeds and, consequently, the God of Christians who, like Ankerberg and Weldon, accept those creeds.

For that matter, *Allāh* is the term used in biblical translations into Turkish and Indonesian and several other Arabic-influenced languages. John Mark Terry, “Approaches to the Evangelization of Muslims,” *Evangelical Missions Quarterly* 32/2 (April 1996): 173, quite properly advises his fellow Protestant missionaries, with regard to Muslim terminology, that “They should feel free to use the names Allah and Isa (Jesus).”
they write on page 451 of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, "we found so many errors in his critique that it is difficult to trust anything he alleges regarding the supposed errors of our research or his defense of Mormonism." Well, okay. But it would be very helpful if they would supply specific examples of my errors, accompanied by analysis that shows how I went wrong.

*Behind the Mask of Mormonism* continues to deny that any honest case can be made for the beliefs of the Latter-day Saints. Those who hold such beliefs, therefore, do so only out of ignorance or from a willful intent to deceive. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints can, in the implicit view of Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, be exhaustively divided, without remainder, into two categories: dupes and con artists. That, they say, is why there are no real arguments for the truth of Mormonism. That is why there is no Mormon apologetics.

Mormonism has no facts to use in its defense, and hence what does not exist cannot be presented. What Mormon apologetic works do is to provide 1) false claims which lack support and 2) what can frequently

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33 There is a growing consensus among professional anti-Mormons that I am one of the meanest people in Mormondom. For instance, in telephone comments to an acquaintance of mine on 19 March 1996, Mr. Bill McKeever, of Mormonism Research Ministry in El Cajon, California, whom I have not met, described me as "arrogant," "lacking civility," "unprofessional," "belligerent," and prone to both "battling people" and "name calling." Having gotten that out of the way, though, perhaps Mr. McKeever will now refute my published critiques of his work. These include Peterson, "Chattanooga Cheapshot," 62–78 (which has been in print for three years); Daniel C. Peterson, William J. Hamblin, and Matthew Roper, "On Alma 7:10 and the Birthplace of Jesus Christ" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1995); and Daniel C. Peterson, "Editor's Introduction: Triptych (Inspired by Hieronymus Bosch)," *FARMS Review of Books* 8/1 (1996): vi–x. (Mr. McKeever has, in the past, ventured to criticize—and to pronounce refuted—unpublished works of mine that he has not read, based only on brief summaries in newspapers. See his comments in the Spring 1994 issue of his periodical, *Mormonism Researched*, for an example of this peculiar practice.)

34 There is one error that I will confess. In my "Chattanooga Cheapshot," 45, I explain that "Judeo-Arabic, as written for instance by Moses Maimonides, was medieval Hebrew written with Arabic letters." This is incorrect. As I have known for many years, Judeo-Arabic is a form of Arabic written in Hebrew letters. How the mistake crept into my review, I cannot say. But Ankerberg and Weldon apparently did not notice it.
only be described as carefully worded distortions—alleged “explanations” for the many logical, historical, biblical, and scientific problems raised by their scripture, theology and history. (p. 363)

Accordingly, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon imply, no Latter-day Saint argument even merits examination, for Real Christians know without looking that it will be empty and that an actual test would be a waste of time. “Mormons may have their ‘scientific,’ ‘historical’ and ‘logical’ arguments for their beliefs,” they say, “but so does the Flat Earth Society” (p. 373). They thus declare themselves the winners of a race in which nobody else is allowed to compete. And I mean nobody else. Their attitude toward the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is, it would seem, precisely their attitude toward all religions that differ from their own. For example, in their 1991 assault on the faith of Islam they declare that, just like mine, “Muslim apologetics are done primarily by distortion,” that “the arguments presented in defense of Islam are largely subjective and”—you guessed it—“prove nothing.” In fact, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon observe, Muslim argumentation is (surprise!) merely “ad hominem.”

But this is manifestly disingenuous, or else it is manifest ignorance. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon cannot plausibly persist in their assertion that no serious arguments exist for any religious beliefs other than their own. Some of the most intelligent people who have ever lived—men such as al-Ghazālī, Ibn Sinā, Abū ʿĪsā al-Warrāq, the Muʿtazilites, Ibn Taymiyya, the Mutakallimūn, and many others—have contended, and contended brilliantly, for the truth of Islam. And those who advocate the truth of the message restored through the Prophet Joseph Smith are themselves not, I think, entirely devoid of training and ability. At any rate, it will not be enough, in my own case, for Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon merely to list the propositions that I have advanced, with expressions of disdain but without any attempt at refutation (as if they were self-evidently absurd). Yet this is basically what they do in Behind the Mask of Mormonism (p. 480

n. 3). They seem to feel that, yes, there are two sides to every question—their side and the wrong one:

Other *ad hominem* and inaccurate comments and misinterpretations regarding our scholarship include: ... baptism for the dead actually *was* practiced by the early Christians; Mormons are *not* guilty of necromancy; the Tanners’ diligent, quality, scholarship is *untrustworthy*; ... there *is* no valid archeological disproof of the *Book of Mormon*; the Dead Sea Scrolls *confirm* the *Book of Mormon* Isaiah readings; Mormon theology isn’t pagan(!).³⁶

With only slight distortions, these statements accurately summarize some of the positions that I took in my review. But I provided, or at least cited, corroborating evidence and argumentation to support each of these notions. Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon supply little or nothing that would lead me to retract them. (See appendix 2 for a possible exception.) But they need to deal with my evidence and argumentation, not just wave it aside with airy references to “the insubstantial nature of Mormon apologetics” (p. 263). And why don’t they? As they themselves imply, this should not be a difficult task for them: “In the last few years,” reports *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, “Mormon apologists, such as those associated with F.A.R.M.S., have produced material seeking to answer the challenges posed by critics within and without the church. Such material has not convinced Mormon critics as to its legitimacy. . . . Although Mormon technical or scholarly apologetic works can appear convincing, evaluating them carefully shows the flaws inherent in their approach” (p. 265). Unfortunately, up to the present time Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon seem to have kept their devastating but careful evaluations to themselves.³⁷

³⁶ Exclamation point and emphasis in the original.

³⁷ In fact, on page 433, Ankerberg and Weldon themselves acknowledge that baptism for the dead was practiced by Christians, albeit by “heretical” ones—which, to plodding minds like my own, seems to contradict their implicit claim, quoted just above, that early Christians did no such thing. It is high sport indeed to watch anti-Mormons struggle with 1 Corinthians 15:29. A recent specimen is Mark J. Cares, *Speaking the Truth in Love to Mormons* (Milwaukee:
• In future revisions of their work, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon may want to be a little more explicit about their credentials, which, they themselves say, render them “qualified to evaluate historic Christian belief and doctrine in light of Mormon claims to represent authentic Christianity” (p. 14). For, as things currently stand, it is more than a little bit difficult to make out just what degrees they do have. (See appendix 3.)

• “Concerned with the damaging impact of the Tanners’ research,” report Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon, “the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (F.A.R.M.S.) began to attack the Tanners’ work in 1991 with a series of disingenuous and truthless book reviews in Review of Books on the Book of Mormon, edited by Dr. Daniel Peterson” (p. 262). However, lest they fall prey to their own charge of disingenuousness, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon might want to mention that the reviews of the Tanners grew less out of “concern” at the Tanners’ writing than out of this Review’s mandate to cover everything published on the Book of Mormon. (And, yes—let’s be honest—out of a perhaps rather unconventional sense of fun.)

Furthermore, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s readers might appreciate it if, in future (un)revisions of their book, they would supply the publication data for these appalling FARMS reviews, so that the obvious flaws in them might be put out public display. There is, I have noticed, a widespread sentiment among opponents of the Church, to the effect that Latter-day Saint scholars are in a panic because of their incapacity to respond to the powerful criticisms of Jerald and Sandra Tanner. If this sentiment is well founded, reading our attempts at rebuttal should only confirm it in the minds of objective observers. However, since Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon continue to show considerable reluctance to look at Latter-day Saint scholarship directly, or even

Northwestern, 1993), 44, who confesses his inability to decide what the passage means, but insists that it cannot in any case mean what the Mormons say it does. Then he proceeds to write of “the almost unbelievable nature of LDS biblical interpretation” (ibid, 215). “Their misuse of the Bible would be laughable,” he remarks, “if it weren’t so damning” (ibid, 216). (This, by the way, is polite and respectful language.) See the review by John W. Welch of “Corinthian Religion and Baptism for the Dead (1 Corinthians 15:29): Insights from Archaeology and Anthropology,” by Roger E. DeMaris, pp. 43–45 of this issue of the FARMS Review of Books.
to mention it, I shall provide the information here, in the hope that they will then simply incorporate it into the next unchanged edition of their book:


[Roper, Matthew. “Comments on the Book of Mormon Witnesses: A Response to Jerald and Sandra Tanner,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (Fall 1993): 164–93, is also relevant.]
• My 1993 review of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism* criticized that book for its apparent ignorance of Latter-day Saint scholarship, evidenced in its virtually complete failure to cite any serious Mormon writing at first hand and also, astonishingly, in its complacent denial that such writing is worth a glance or, in more than a few places, that it even exists. ("He that answereth a matter before he heareth it," says Proverbs 18:13, "it is folly and shame unto him.") Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon's seemingly smug attitude was reminiscent of that attributed, fairly or unfairly, to Benjamin Jowett, master of Balliol College, Oxford, in the late 1870s. A satirical ditty popular among the students of Balliol at the time represented him as boasting that

First come I; my name is Jowett.
There's no knowledge but I know it.
I am Master of this college:
What I don't know isn't knowledge.

So, likewise, since Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon are, so far as I can discern, unaware of competent Mormon scholarship and argumentation, they think there is none. But while Benjamin Jowett, that prolific and influential translator of the works of Plato, had justly earned a reputation for prodigious learning, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon—how shall I put this gently?—have not. They seemed, in *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*, to depend almost entirely on Jerald and Sandra Tanner to do their reading, thinking, and evaluation for them. In *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, they still do. Only, now, they do so with an odd kind of defiance. "Some Mormon apologists," they huff, "think that all Christian critics of Mormonism should spend thousands of dollars and man-hours in order to stay abreast of the latest in Mormon defensive scholarship in its numerous forms and offshoots. Specialists like the Tanners may, but we believe it isn't necessary for all Mormon critics to do so" (p. 453).

They would be wise, however, to omit this comment from future 1992 printings of their book. It is a bit too much like going around with a sign taped to your backside reading "Kick me." People who write books should not boast, at least publicly, about their refusal to do adequate research. Even the Tanners themselves
don't seem to have a great deal of respect for those who rely so slavishly on them:

Sandra Tanner, apparently somewhat embarrassed by discussions of their editorial idiosyncrasies, has justified their practices as follows: "We have found that the average reader cannot read a page of material and digest it to come out with the most important point." This provides a very interesting insight into the Tanners' opinion of the intellectual capacity of their intended audience—an insight which I find no reason to question. Sandra Tanner goes on to provide revealing examples supporting her evaluation of their readers. "I realize that the average Library Science major is appalled at that [editorial style] and finds it childish because they've been trained to go over and read a page and pick out what's important. But most people aren't; most people have not gone to school enough that, I mean, it's absolutely astounding. I get calls regularly from people wanting to know where they can find this book 'Ibid' we keep quoting from. A lady called me up the other day and she says, 'I thought I knew all the books in the Bible and I can't find that.'" 38

It appears, however, that this is the kind of audience to which Behind the Mask of Mormonism is addressed. It is an audience ill-equipped to evaluate Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon's book critically, and one that is certainly unlikely to look at the Latter-day Saint side of any issue. I would guess that our two authors count on such considerations for their success. So they are back, professing to be irritated at the slights they have allegedly suffered but still peddling, it seems to me, the same uninformed and poisonous bigotry that ruined the first printing of their book. As Talleyrand is reported to have said in quite another, earlier, context, "They have learnt nothing, and forgotten nothing."

Appendix 1: Drawing on the Tradition

Dr. John Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. John Weldon provide us a stellar example of how critics of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have tended to recycle time-worn claims and superannuated arguments as if they were fresh, using and reusing the work of their predecessors, often without credit, and almost always without any acknowledgment of the replies (often lethal) that Latter-day Saints have made. Gary Jacobson, an alert reader of fundamentalist attack-literature who lives in Tempe, Arizona, has noticed a particularly delightful case of this.

In my introduction to FARMS Review of Books 8/1, I mentioned the very peculiar way in which two professional anti-Mormons named Bill McKeever and Eric Johnson, in a volume called Questions to Ask Your Mormon Friend, had misunderstood an argument that Professor Stephen D. Ricks and I had advanced.39 But I remarked that I was even more surprised when I found that another, later, book, entitled Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons, perpetuated precisely the same odd misreading.40 Moreover, noting that the authors of the second book, Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine of the California-based Christian Research Institute, had the subtitle of our book slightly wrong and were substantially in error in their page reference to it, I suggested the possibility that they had never actually looked directly at our book at all.41

Mr. Jacobson’s discovery seems to indicate that Rhodes and Bodine do, indeed, have a unique way of using the work of their anti-Mormon predecessors: Reading their book, which was published in 1995, Mr. Jacobson found himself reminded of an earlier tome, one published in 1975 by a certain Marvin W. Cowan and entitled Mormon Claims Answered.42 He could find no

40 Ron Rhodes and Marian Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures with the Mormons (Eugene: Harvest House, 1995).
41 Peterson, “Editor’s Introduction: Triptych,” viii-x.
42 Marvin W. Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered (Salt Lake City: Cowan, 1975).
mention of Mr. Cowan nor of his book in the 1995 volume—not in its acknowledgment, nor in its notes, nor in its bibliography, nor in its indexes—but he did find some intriguing parallels. I shall reproduce these parallels without comment, for I think none is necessary:

**Cowan (1975)**

Mormons also apply Isa. 29:1–4 to the *B. of M.* Apostle LeGrand Richards says of v. 4, “Now, obviously, the only way a dead people could speak ‘out of the ground’ or ‘low out of the dust’ would be by the written word, and this people did through the *B. of M.* Truly it has a *familiar spirit* for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel.”

There are 15 Old Testament References to “familiar spirits” and all of them deal with witchcraft! (See Lev. 20:6,27; Deut. 18:10–12 etc.). If the LDS believe the *B. of M.* has a “familiar spirit,” they are identifying it with witchcraft.

**Rhodes and Bodine (1995)**

The ever-popular Mormon book *A Marvelous Work and a Wonder* by apostle LeGrand Richards draws the following conclusion from the Isaiah passage: “Now, obviously, the only way a dead people could speak ‘out of the ground’ or ‘low out of the dust’ would be by the written word, and this people did through the *Book of Mormon.* Truly it has a familiar spirit for it contains the words of the prophets of the God of Israel.”

There are at least 15 Old Testament References to “familiar spirits” and all of them deal with witchcraft or spiritism (See Leviticus 19:31; 20:6, 27; 1 Samuel 28:3–9; 2 Kings 21:6; 23:24; Isaiah 8:19; 19:3; 29:4). Therefore, when the Book of Mormon claims it has a familiar spirit, it is inadvertently claiming a relationship with the demonic.

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44 Rhodes and Bodine, *Reasoning from the Scriptures*, 93.
These events DO NOT fit Isa. 29:11–12 because the text shows: 1) This is a parable and the subject is a VISION and NOT a BOOK. 2) The VISION of the prophets of that day had become as meaningless to the people as the words of a book that was sealed. Isaiah was referring to the condition of the people at THAT TIME, and not about a BOOK of some FUTURE TIME.47

According to Harris, the professor said the translation was correct. Anthon could have said this only if he READ it. But Isaiah said the learned man could NOT read the book because it was sealed! The only way the professor knew the plates were “sealed” was because Harris told him they were.49

In Isaiah the BOOK went to the learned man first—then to the unlearned. But, the Mormon story has the book of gold plates delivered first to the unlearned (Smith) who copied some of the characters

The Mormon interpretation of Isaiah 29:11–12 has several problems. One is that the text shows the subject is a vision and not a book. The visions God gave to the prophets of that day had become as meaningless to the people as the words of a book that was sealed. Isaiah was referring to the condition of the people at that time and not some future era.48

According to Martin Harris, the professor said the translation was correct. But Anthon could have said this only if he read the plates—not just some characters scribbled on a paper by Joseph Smith. Notice, however, that Isaiah said the learned man could not read it because it was sealed. The only way the professor knew the plates were “sealed” was because Harris told him they were.50

In Isaiah 29:11–12, the book went to the learned man first then to the unlearned. But the Mormon story has the book of gold delivered first to the unlearned Smith, who copied some of the characters (allegedly from

47 Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
48 Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 99.
49 Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
50 Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 99–100.
with his translation on a piece of paper which was taken to the learned (Anthon). In Isa.
the same “sealed book” was taken to both the learned and the unlearned man. But Anthon didn’t receive any book—sealed or unsealed!51

In Isa. the book was delivered to the unlearned and he simply said, “I am not learned,” and made no effort to read it or translate it. BUT, Smith claimed he DID read the book, even though unlearned.52

Apostle LeGrand Richards says, “Professor Anthon did not realize that he was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah” (M.W. & W., p. 50). But the professor didn’t believe he was fulfilling MORMON prophecy, because in a letter to E.D. Howe, a Painesville, Ohio, newspaper editor, he relates the event as a hoax and a scheme to “cheat the farmer (Harris) of his money” (and Harris did lose his money).53

Amazingly, Mormon apostle LeGrand Richards concluded that “Professor Anthon did not realize that he was literally fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah.” The professor, however, certainly didn’t believe he was fulfilling Mormon prophecy. Indeed, in a letter to E.D. Howe, a Painesville, Ohio, newspaper editor, Anthon related the events as a hoax and a scheme to cheat Harris out of money. Instead of fulfilling prophecy, Anthon became somewhat of a prophet himself in that Harris actually did lose money.54

51 Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
52 Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 100.
53 Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
54 Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 100.
55 Cowan, Mormon Claims Answered, 31.
56 Rhodes and Bodine, Reasoning from the Scriptures, 100.
It would be unfair to describe the foregoing as “A Study in CRI Behavior”—a title suggested by an egregiously ad hominem anti-FARMS polemic that the Rev. James White, of Phoenix, has recently been circulating on the Internet—despite the fact that both Marian Bodine and Ron Rhodes are employees of the Christian Research Institute. They are individuals and are responsible for their own actions. Close observers will note, however, that the listed parallels come from only seven or eight closely clustered pages of Rhodes and Bodine’s four-hundred-page book, and that they relate to only two consecutive pages of Mr. Cowan’s earlier work. Some might find it amusing to search for other parallels, or even to broaden the investigation to examine possible similar use, by Rhodes and Bodine, of other anti-Mormon literature. Perhaps a donor will wish to establish a prize for the student who finds the most (ahem) parallels. It seems unlikely that research of this remarkable quality is limited to the few pages of their book discussed here.

Appendix 2: Of Jews and Nephites

“Careful readers of the Book of Mormon will be surprised,” I passingly remarked in my review of this book’s first incarnation, “to learn [from Ankerberg and Weldon] that the Nephites were ‘Jewish.’” ⁵⁷ This occasioned Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon’s most effective argument against me. Indeed, in a sense it is the only argument, properly defined, that they adduce against me. “Peterson,” they cry (on p. 480 n. 3), “declares we are wrong in claiming the alleged Nephites were Jews! (To the contrary, in the very first book of the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi), the Nephites are said to be Jews some 15 times).” ⁵⁸ They thereupon proceed to list sixteen scriptural references, eight of which come from 1 Nephi, and twelve of which have no obvious relevance to the issue under discussion.

Two of the cited passages, however, do score points against my comment. First, 2 Nephi 30:4 represents the prophet Nephi as

⁵⁸ Emphasis in the original.
predicting that “then shall the remnant of our seed know concerning us, how that we came out from Jerusalem, and that they are descendants of the Jews.” And Doctrine and Covenants 19:27 speaks of “the Jew, of whom the Lamanites are a remnant.”

These two passages seem fairly clear, and it looks as if I might be wrong. And I might add at this juncture that I would be perfectly happy to surrender this point to Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon. Nothing of any substance in my review rests upon the issue and, from a certain angle, their argument seems incontestable.

But is the question really so simple? No. Many passages in the Book of Mormon imply a distinction between the Nephites and the Jews. At 1 Nephi 3:3, for instance, Lehi explains that “Laban hath the record of the Jews and also a genealogy of my forefathers.” Third Nephi 29:8 distinguishes “the Jews” from “the remnant of the house of Israel,” among whom the Nephites and Lamanites are to be reckoned. “And it shall come to pass,” predicts 2 Nephi 29:13,

that the Jews shall have the words of the Nephites, and the Nephites shall have the words of the Jews; and the Nephites and the Jews shall have the words of the lost tribes of Israel; and the lost tribes of Israel shall have the words of the Nephites and the Jews.

Is it possible that the people of Lehi can, at the same time, be considered both Jews and non-Jews? Yes, it is. The terminology is ambiguous. Noah Webster’s 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language, which records the language in use at about the time of the appearance of the Book of Mormon, illustrates the problem. It defines the term Jew as referring to “a Hebrew or Israelite”—which is itself ambiguous, since the patriarch Abraham was a Hebrew (Genesis 14:13), but could hardly be said to be an Israelite since that word designates a descendant of any of the

59 In addition to those quoted in the text of this appendix, see 1 Nephi 1:19–20; 4:36; 10:2; 17:44; 2 Nephi 25:1–2, 5–6; Jacob 4:14–16. The distinction manifestly does not depend upon geographical distance; it is more substantial than that.

60 See 1 Nephi 13:34; 2 Nephi 28:2; Alma 46:23; 3 Nephi 20:16; Mormon 7:10; 3 Nephi 21:12, 22; Book of Mormon title page.
twelve sons of his grandson Jacob/Israel. But Webster also describes the word as “a contraction of Judas or Judah.” And, in fact, it is obvious to those who know something about Hebrew or about Semitic philology that the Hebrew word yəhūdī (“Jew,” “Judahite”), is an adjective derived from the Hebrew personal and tribal name yəhūdāh (“Judah”).

But the simple fact is that Lehi and his family were not from the tribe of Judah. On the contrary, “Lehi . . . was a descendant of Manasseh, who was the son of Joseph who was sold into Egypt by the hands of his brethren” (Alma 10:3). Even two of the passages cited by Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon as labeling the Nephites Jews actually proclaim them “descendants of Joseph.”

So, what should we make of 2 Nephi 30:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:27? The old Smith’s Bible Dictionary, a conservative Protestant favorite, offers some helpful insight on the use of the term Jew (or, more properly, of its Semitic equivalent) in ancient times: “This name was properly applied to a member of the kingdom of Judah after the separation of the ten tribes. The term first makes its appearance just before the captivity of the ten tribes (2 K. xvi. 6).”

Now, as any careful student of the Book of Mormon knows, Lehi—although he was descended from Manasseh, one of the tribes associated with the northern kingdom of Israel—was a resident of the southern kingdom of Judah. Accordingly, one could, by courtesy, consider him a Jew. (In much the same way, although her relationship to Goethe or Beethoven is probably distant at best, a native of Kenya who has received German citizenship is a German.) It is this geographical or political sense of the term, owing to the dominance of the tribe of Judah in the territory surrounding Jerusalem, that Nephi seems to have in mind when, at 2 Nephi 33:8, he declares that “I have charity for the Jew—I say Jew, because I mean them from whence I came.”

63 See 1 Nephi 1:4. Presumably Lehi’s immediate ancestors were among those who fled the northern kingdom when they sensed its impending destruction.
The much more recent *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible* describes Jews as, “In biblical terms, the members of the S[outhern] state of Judah ... or the postexilic people of Israel in contrast to Gentiles ... or the adherents of worship of Yahweh [i.e., Jehovah] as done at Jerusalem after the Exile.”64 All three of these meanings seem to be relevant to 2 Nephi 30:4 and Doctrine and Covenants 19:27. The former passage occurs in the context of a prophetic discussion in which “Jews” are distinguished from “Gentiles,” with no indication that there remains a third group not covered by the two terms. It is, manifestly, a case of the “people of Israel in contrast to Gentiles.” The Nephites would naturally feel kinship with the ethnic Jews because they were both “adherents of worship of Yahweh as done at Jerusalem.” But, even here, the ambiguity of the term surfaces. For, only a few verses later, at 2 Nephi 30:7, after a prophetic prediction that the apostate descendants of Lehi (whom he has just called “descendants of the Jews”) would eventually accept Christ, Nephi foresees the day when “the Jews which are scattered also shall begin to believe in Christ”—as if they were a distinct group. Similarly, Doctrine and Covenants 19:27 is perfectly understandable on the basis of the idea that the Lamanites are a “remnant” of the Jews because their ancestors came from Jerusalem, or Judah, where they had once worshipped Yahweh or Jehovah, and because (in a world considered as exhaustively divided between the one group and the other) they are not Gentiles.

Incidentally, Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon fall victim to the ambiguous meaning of the term *Jew* when, elsewhere, they assault the Muslim holy book, the Qurʾān, on a closely related issue: “The Koran,” they exclaim, “also teaches that Abraham was not a Jew, neither a Christian; but he was a Muslim. . . . But the Jews consider Abraham a Jew. The Christians consider Abraham a Jew. Jesus Himself considered Abraham a Jew. All the world

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64 J. A. Sanders, in *The Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. George A. Buttrick et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 2:897. One should not worry too much about the idea that two of the three usages occur only in the postexilic period. We have very little evidence one way or the other about the use of the term *Jew* in preexilic times. But the discussion of this fact would go beyond my present purpose.
considers Abraham a Jew—except the Muslims.” Of course, if the word Jew is taken to refer to the religion of all the faithful believers whose story is told in the Old Testament or Hebrew Bible, Abraham was indubitably a Jew. But few scholars would admit that Abraham was a Jew if that signifies his being an adherent of Judaism, according to the strict meaning of the word. For Judaism, in a very important sense, came into existence only with the return of the Jews (meaning, mostly, Judahites) from the Babylonian captivity and with the subsequent rise to central importance of the synagogue and the rabbis. (One could plausibly argue, in fact, that Judaism came into being with the cessation of Jewish prophecy.) And, of course, Abraham is certainly not a descendant of his great-grandson, Judah. Bearing these points in mind, notice what the Arabic Qur’ān—an indisputably ancient, unquestionably Near Eastern, undeniably Semitic text—actually says: “Abraham was not a Jew [yahūdī] nor a Christian, but he was a monotheist [ḥanīf], submissive [muslim], and he was not among the idolaters.” In this passage, as virtually all commentators have agreed, the Qur’ān seeks to go back to a figure who antedates the divisions of the “People of the Book” into competing and apostate sects, to a man who, since he lived prior to the rise of Judaism and Christianity, before even the birth of Jacob’s son Judah and the origin of the tribe that would bear Judah’s name, can be considered the common father of the faithful. By the plain and literal meaning of the Hebrew/Arabic term yahūdī, the Qur’ān is correct. “The word ‘Jew’ is derived from Judah,” explains one very recent college-level introduction to the Old Testament. “It is technically applicable to the covenant people only following the Babylonian exile when the majority of the returnees to Palestine were from this prominent tribe.” Dr. Ankerberg and Dr. Dr. Weldon miss the point, however, because they cannot see beyond the vague modern usage of the word Jew.

In fact, the use of the term Jew in Latter-day Saint scripture may even serve as evidence for the dating of those canonical texts:

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65 Ankerberg and Weldon, The Facts on Islam, 34.
66 Qur’ān 3:67 (my translation).
By the time of Lehi, when the ten tribes of the kingdom of Israel had already been gone for decades, the word *Jew* was beginning to be used to designate all those who worshipped Jehovah, for the simple reason that members of the tribe of Judah were overwhelmingly preponderant among those worshipers of Jehovah who remained. But neither its obvious original meaning nor the ancient division of Israel into twelve tribes was forgotten overnight. Lehi’s time, with the century or so that followed, was a transitional period in the use of the word. And, intriguingly, the Book of Mormon reflects this nicely. Usually it distinguishes between Jewish and non-Jewish Israelites, but occasionally, as we have seen, it does not. Eventually, though, as surviving members of other Israelite tribes were subsumed under the dominant Judahites and effectively disappeared, the word *Jew* came to be regarded as interchangeable with the word *Israelite*. Thus the Doctrine and Covenants, which is a primarily nineteenth-century text initially addressed to a nineteenth-century audience, can comfortably describe the non-Judahite Lamanites as a “remnant” of the Jews.68

Accordingly, I am willing to admit that, in the broadest sense of the word as it is currently used, Lehi and his family were Jews. But in the precise, technical sense, they were clearly not. Lehi was not a Judahite, *yəhūdī*. He and his party had already left Jerusalem before the exile began. It was the precise, technical sense that I had in mind. The problem here arises because I was using the term *Jew* in its clearly defined, original, ancient meaning, while my critics understand it only in the less precise modern way. Nonetheless, if Ankerberg and Weldon wish to claim a victory here, they are welcome to it.

Appendix 3: Disarmed by Degrees

Although they themselves insist that their academic background qualifies them to critique the faith of the Latter-day Saints, it is very difficult to figure out what degrees Dr. Ankerberg and

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68 I am indebted to Professor William J. Hamblin for this interesting suggestion.
Dr. Dr. Weldon have and what sort of education they have received.

As an example, take the back cover of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism*, which describes John Ankerberg as holding "master's degrees in divinity and church history and the philosophy of Christian thought, and a doctorate degree from Luther Rice Seminary." Does this mean that he has two master's degrees, or three? On page 14, we are told that "John Ankerberg has two graduate degrees in Christian History and the History of Christian Thought." Do these two degrees include his doctorate? If so, what happened to the other master's degree, or to the other two master's degrees? If his doctorate is *not* included, *why* not? (A 1991 Ankerberg and Weldon publication speaks of an indeterminate number of "masters degrees" possessed by Mr. Ankerberg, but mentions no doctorate.)⁶⁹ And is "the philosophy of Christian thought" the same subject as "the History of Christian Thought"? Do any of John Ankerberg's diplomas represent correspondence degrees? A letter sent to me on 10 April 1996 by Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary claims that it is "the world’s leader in non-traditional, practical, conservative theological education." A brochure sent on the same day by Luther Rice Seminary and Bible College—note, incidentally, the variation in the school's name—explains that "All LRS degree programs are offered through Home Study or Distance Education."⁷⁰ But do graduate degrees earned via correspondence represent the same quality of training as those attained through close work with graduate faculty advisors and research in graduate libraries? (Every reputable graduate program that I am aware of requires a minimum of one year, and usually two years, in residence, and practical reality almost always demands more than the stipulated minimum.)

Furthermore, a search of the *Comprehensive Dissertation Index* in the Brigham Young University library located no entry for John Ankerberg, and a scan of the hundreds of degree-granting institutions listed as submitting reports of dissertations to the *Index* (including such evangelical Protestant institutions as

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⁷⁰ Luther Rice’s slogan, as given in the brochure, is “The World Is Our Campus.”
Dallas Theological Seminary and Denver Conservative Baptist Seminary) detected no reference to Luther Rice Seminary. Did he not write a dissertation? (Academic doctoral programs typically require dissertations.) Or is Luther Rice not covered by the Comprehensive Dissertation Index? Or both? Finally, a huge standard reference work on graduate and professional degree programs that I consulted, although containing information on more than 1500 degree-granting institutions (including many seminaries, representing all brands of Christianity), apparently fails to mention Luther Rice.71

Careful readers are bound to find this all a tad puzzling, and would no doubt appreciate further information so that they can be properly assured of Ankerberg’s academic qualifications to speak for his type of Protestantism against the Latter-day Saints. There is, of course, nothing necessarily wrong with such institutions as Luther Rice and the people who attend them. To the extent that the programs they offer enhance the ability of Protestant clergy and laypersons to serve other people, and to serve the Lord, they are certainly to be welcomed. They fill a niche, and they serve a

71 See Peterson’s Graduate and Professional Programs: An Overview 1996 (Princeton: Peterson’s, 1996). During a 15 April 1996 telephone conversation with me, an official at Princeton Theological Seminary was similarly unable to find any mention of Luther Rice in the reference works available to her. She had not heard of the school. Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, 4:111, says that, at least as recently as 1995, Luther Rice Seminary was unaccredited. On the other hand, the “Distance Education Prospectus” of Pacific College and Pacific College of Graduate Studies, a school (of sorts) that I shall introduce below, calls it “an accredited American institution.” A 10 April 1996 letter to me from Dennis Dieringer, director of admissions at Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, says that the Seminary is “accredited by the Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools,” which is “recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.” But this does not seem to match the accreditation process for seminaries and divinity schools as it was outlined to me by an official of Denver’s Iliff School of Theology on 16 April 1996. She told me that such institutions are typically accredited by the same regional bodies that certify mainstream universities and colleges, followed by the added scrutiny of an organization called the Association of Theological Schools (ATS). Some fundamentalist schools, she continued, claim accreditation from organizations that are, themselves, not properly authorized to give it. The General Catalog just published by Luther Rice admits that the school “is not accredited by a regional accrediting association.” See The Catalog of Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, 1996–1998 (Lithonia, Ga.: Luther Rice Seminary, n.d), 11.
purpose. But it is not obvious that the kind of “practical” training they supply qualifies their students as academic authorities on theology—let alone on the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

In the case of John Weldon, I fear that the situation is more complicated still. The back cover of *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* assures us that he has “master’s degrees in divinity and Christian apologetics, and a doctorate in comparative religion.” But it would be nice to know where he received these degrees. Furthermore, are the “master’s degrees in divinity and Christian apologetics” mentioned on the back cover the same as the “two master’s degrees in biblical studies” mentioned on page 14, or are they in addition to those? And does he really have only one doctorate? *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* says on page 14 that John Weldon “has a Ph.D. in comparative religion, including a second doctorate specializing in cultic theology.” Why was this second doctorate not mentioned on the back cover? It was also omitted on the back cover of Ankerberg and Weldon’s 1991 attack on Islam, which mentions for him only “a doctorate in comparative religion, with an emphasis on Eastern religions.” Where did he obtain this second doctorate? What kind of a field is “cultic theology” anyway, and what kind of school teaches it? (By Ankerberg and Weldon’s standards, I suppose Brigham Young University does!) And what does it mean for one doctoral degree to “include” another? In all my experience in academic circles, I have never heard of any such thing. Nor has anybody with whom I have spoken about it. (Is it some sort of quantity discount? “Buy one and get the second diploma free”?)

A published 1985 reference to Mr. Weldon reported that he had received his B.A. (with honors) from San Diego State University, following that with an M.A. from the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, in Melbourne, Australia. By 1987, a biographical sketch inside one of his books identified him as “John Weldon, M.A., M.Div.” Between 1987 and the 1992 publication of *Everything You Ever Wanted to Know about Mormonism*.

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73 Hal May, ed., *Contemporary Authors*, vol. 113 (Detroit: Gale Research, 1985), 509.
however, Mr. Weldon was apparently quite busy acquiring yet more advanced degrees, including two doctorates. That book also described him as “a graduate of law school, where he majored in the subject of evaluating evidence for the true [sic] claims of Christianity”—a somewhat unusual legal specialty, as I noted earlier—although Behind the Mask of Mormonism now says that he is “a graduate of Simon Greenleaf University, where he majored in the subject of evaluating evidence for the truth claims of Christianity” (p. 14, emphasis added).75 All of this continues to be perplexing. As I reported in my 1993 review, a search of the Comprehensive Dissertation Index turned up no mention of Mr. Weldon, which appeared to indicate that his doctorates were earned at the kind of institution that either (a) does not require a dissertation or (b) is not represented in the Comprehensive Dissertation Index. (Or, alternatively, that his dissertations were submitted prior to 1861.)

Although Mr. Weldon, so far as I am able to determine, never names the school or schools from which he obtained his doctorate(s), he has given us the valuable clue that his Ph.D. comes from Australia (p. 480 n. 3). That fact, coupled with the information, mentioned above, that he received an M.A. from the Pacific College of Graduate Studies in Melbourne, Australia, would lead one to suspect that it is this same institution from which he secured at least one of his doctoral degrees. With that in mind, I shall summarize something of what I have learned about that school.76

The Pacific College of Graduate Studies is a fundamentalist Protestant operation. For instance, its published “Doctrinal Statement” affirms the inerrancy and finality of the 66 books of the

75 My colleague Dr. William Hamblin and I visited Simon Greenleaf University in southern California during late November 1989. It was an enlightening experience, one that I shall someday describe in print.

76 My information comes from Dennis R. Curyer, of the greater Melbourne area, to whom I am grateful for his assistance, as well as from a 25 March 1996 telephone call to the Pacific College of Graduate Studies made by my colleague William Hamblin. I shall be quoting, too, from the January 1996 edition of the “Distance Education Prospectus” of Pacific College and Pacific College of Graduate Studies. (Incidentally, Mr. Curyer, a Latter-day Saint student at the University of Melbourne, when asked via telephone on 26 March 1996 what he knew about the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, replied that, until then, he had never heard of it.)
Protestant biblical canon and requires that its students' work agree with a conservative Protestant view of such subjects as the Trinity. The first point of its six-item statement of “Academic Philosophy” refers to the ability of “the Christian teacher . . . to examine critically and to confront effectively the views of opponents of Christianity.” Its courses in archaeology survey the “archaeological evidence” not so much to gain a thorough understanding of the state of the discipline but in order to show “how it supports the historical veracity of the Bible.” And its course on “Logical Fallacies,” Philosophy 502, is designed to “investigate” the alleged fallacies that are “used against the Bible and Christian belief.”

Established in the area of greater Melbourne in 1980, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies seems to have no campus, and apparently offers degrees only by correspondence. A telephone conversation with a worker at the College indicated that, as of late March 1996, the College had just moved, and that matters there were, consequently, in something of a state of chaos. (The situation was rendered more difficult, the worker said, by the fact that, in order to keep overhead costs low, the College employs minimal staff.) Only the College’s dean has e-mail. When asked for a Fax number, the worker replied that the College owns just one Fax machine, which shares the College’s telephone number. And, according to the official letter sent out to prospective students (my copy is dated 26 March 1996), all telephone calls that come in to that College number after business hours on Monday through Thursday evenings are automatically routed to the home of the “Principal” of the College. “When it is time for the student to graduate,” says the College’s xeroxed “Distance Education Prospectus,” “a ceremony is organised at the student’s home church or at any other location that is relevant to the student, his family and community. The ceremony takes about ten minutes and full academic dress (where appropriate) is usually required.”

According to the materials it sends out to inquirers, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies has close but not clearly defined links with (of all places!) Luther Rice Seminary. I would judge, too, that there is some unease at the College about its academic reputation, because among these materials is a two-page collection of endorsements from fundamentalist Protestants affilia-
ated with a pair of conservative seminaries (one "a world class, accredited institution," and the other "an accredited American institution") and a number of other organizations. A certain Rev. Dr. Bruce Dipple is quoted as saying that the College’s "degrees are of a high standard and are worthy of the endorsement of any accrediting body," which may, I suspect, be taken as a tacit admission that, in reality, they have not actually been accredited. (If they had, surely mention of that fact would have been more impressive than Rev. Dr. Dipple’s compliments.)

Graduate students enrolled with the Pacific College of Graduate Studies may concentrate in fields such as "Christian Counseling," "Pastoral Care," "Pastoral Ministry," and, my own favorite, "Apologetics." Among the courses students may take toward the latter major are Cults 501 ("Introduction to Cults"), Cults 502 ("The Theology of Cults"), and Cults 506, which covers "Mormons (Church of Jesus Christ of the [sic] Latter Day [sic] Saints)." The College offers "three professional doctoral degrees by distance education," which include "Doctor of Biblical Studies," "Doctor of Christian Education," and "Doctor of Ministry." The faculty of the College appears to consist of 24 people, including the President, the Principal, and two deans. These personnel are not, it would seem, necessarily resident in Australia. After all, one of the listed "tutors and supervisors" is none other than "Dr. John Weldon" himself, who is identified as a "senior researcher for 'The John Ankerberg Show,'" which is based in Chattanooga, Tennessee.

In the "Distance Education Prospectus" of Pacific College and Pacific College of Graduate Studies, John Weldon’s degrees are listed as "M.Div.—Luther Rice Sem., DMin [sic]—Luther Rice Sem., Ph.D." So here we find identified the two doctorates that are occasionally ascribed to him. Unfortunately, though, there is no mention of a law degree, nor of an M.A. Nor, once again, are we told where he obtained his Ph.D. I have hypothesized, because of his statement that it comes from Australia and because of his intimate (though geographically distant) connection with the Pacific College of Graduate Studies, that it was from this rather obscure Melbourne correspondence school that he received it. But the enigma remains thus far unresolvable. For the College’s three listed doctoral degrees—"Doctor of Biblical Studies," "Doctor
Ankerberg and Weldon are very upset with me because, they say, I assert that “Dr. Weldon’s Ph.D. is probably from a degree mill.” (Note the singular, incidentally, with no word of a second doctorate. I actually declared myself mystified by both of his doctoral degrees.) Such an accusation, they write, made simply because his doctorate “is not listed in Comprehensive Dissertation Index[,] is unfounded. Australian institutions do not report their dissertations to U.S. Indices” (p. 480 n. 3). But, in fact, a cursory survey of the many, many degree-granting schools listed in the Index found institutions not only in North America but in the United Kingdom, on the European continent, in Asia, and, yes, in Australia. In fact, I located listings from two schools in Melbourne itself, and there may be more. Unfortunately, though, the Pacific College of Graduate Studies was not among them. What is more, as I have just noted, the catalog distributed by the Pacific College of Graduate Studies identifies one of Weldon’s two doctorates, his Doctor of Ministry degree (D.Min.), as coming not from a school in Australia but from a seminary in the United States of America. From Luther Rice Seminary, to be precise.77 So, as far as that particular Weldon doctorate is concerned, the judgment seems to be sustained that it comes from an institution that either (a) does not require a dissertation or (b) is not represented in the Comprehensive Dissertation Index. (Or, alternatively, that Weldon submitted his dissertation prior to 1861.) It would have been interesting to know, if he wrote one, what his dissertation was about.

What is more, it is not at all clear how a D.Min. degree would qualify Weldon to research and write on either “comparative religions” or “cultic theology.” As Professor James M. Robinson, the renowned director of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at the Claremont Graduate School, has observed, “Doctor of Ministry is the name of a degree aimed at practical church work such as is earned by a pastor. It is not the scholarly degree (Ph.D. or Th.D.).” And Frederick Von Bush, of California’s conservative Fuller Theological Seminary, concurs, explaining that the Doctor

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77 The introductory brochure distributed by Luther Rice Seminary lists fourteen “prominent Christian leaders” among their graduates. I recognized four of the names, including John Weldon and John Ankerberg.
of Ministry degree, even when it is legitimately earned from a legitimate institution, is "professional, not academic."78 For that matter, the 1996-1998 General Catalog published by Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary goes out of its way to stress that several of its original leaders had "earned an academic doctorate"—i.e., either a Th.D. or a Ph.D.—in implicit contrast to the D.Min., which, although many of the early Seminary leaders seem to have held that degree, is never so described.79

Actually, of course, I never said that Weldon’s claimed doctorates were "from a degree mill" (see Proverbs 28:1). But I do admit to being puzzled about this issue, and the repeated tendency of anti-Mormon agitators to claim phony degrees does, I think, give me some grounds for justifiable suspicion.80 Our authors could end my perplexity (and, no doubt, that of at least some

78 Letters of James M. Robinson (23 March 1989) and Frederick Von Bush (19 May 1989) to Robert L. Brown, reproduced in Brown and Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive, 4:118, 120.
79 The Catalog of Luther Rice Bible College and Seminary, 1996–1998, 1-2, emphasis added.
80 I will not include here one of the earliest (and perhaps the greatest) of all anti-Mormons, the excommunicated immoralist Doctor Philastus Hurlbut. For he came by his “Doctor” honestly: It was his given first name. (His parents apparently named him “Doctor” because, as a seventh son, he was folklorically expected to have miraculous powers.) But see Robert L. Brown and Rosemary Brown, They Lie in Wait to Deceive (Mesa: Brownsworth, 1981–), 1:1-43 (on “Dr.” Dee Jay Nelson); 2:75-115, 165-214. (on “Dr.” Walter Martin and “Dr.” Dee Jay Nelson); 3:29-66 (on “Dr.” Walter Martin); 4:71-145 (on “Dr.” Richard Fales, “Dr.” Charles Crane, and “Dr.” John L. Smith). A similar aroma seems to emanate from “Dr. Howard Davis,” who was prominently involved with “Dr.” Martin in an effort, during the late 1970s, to resurrect the so-called “Spalding theory” of the origins of the Book of Mormon. In an article on the case, the Los Angeles Times (30 June 1977) introduced “Howard A. Davis, 33, who holds a doctor of theology degree from a California Bible college,” as “an unemployed lab technician.” I am told by a credible source that one widely published critic of the Church, not an evangelical, derives his title of Doctor from his background as an herbal medicine salesman. (His customers call him Doc). I have said nothing of bogus genealogies, an anti-Mormon ploy used by “Dr.” Martin and his associate Wayne Cowdrey, on which volumes 2 and 3 of the Browns’ ongoing work have some truly delicious information. Walter Martin was the founder of the Christian Research Institute (CRI), which, since his death, has been led by Ed Decker’s ardent fan Hank Hanegraaff, and was the host of CRI’s national radio call-in show, The Bible Answer Man.
other readers) by simply telling us clearly when and where and in what discipline they earned their degrees.⁸¹ (They are the people who raised the issue of their credentials in the first place.) As it is, Ankerberg and Weldon advise us to reject Joseph Smith’s accounts of his First Vision because one narrative of the event mentions the Son and another mentions the Father and the Son. They call this a “contradiction” (see pp. 268–72.) So what are we to say of John Ankerberg, who sometimes claims a doctorate and sometimes does not, or of John Weldon, who sometimes mentions one doctorate and sometimes two?⁸² What are we to make of their vagueness on the subject, which persists in *Behind the Mask of Mormonism* despite my criticisms and despite their own obvious touchiness about it? Why don’t they just settle the matter?

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⁸¹ I shall begin this new era of full disclosure by revealing that I was awarded a Ph.D.— alas, I have only one—in Near Eastern Languages and Cultures (with an emphasis in Arabic and Persian) at the University of California at Los Angeles in 1990, following my submission of a dissertation entitled “Cosmogony and the Ten Separated Intellects in the Rāḥat al-‘Aqīl of Ḥamīd al-Dīn al-Kirmānī.” I had previously earned a B.A. in classical Greek, with a minor in philosophy, from Brigham Young University in 1977, which I followed with about four and a half years in the Middle East studying in Jerusalem (on formative Judaism and Christianity) and at the American University in Cairo (on Arabic language and literature, and medieval Islam).

⁸² Compare Peterson, “Chattanooga Cheapsot,” 14 n. 23.