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FOUNDATION
FOR ANCIENT
RESEARCH AND
MORMON STUDIES

THE FARMS REVIEW

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THE FARMS REVIEW

THE FARMS REVIEW

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THE FARMS REVIEW

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Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies
Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts
Brigham Young University

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TO OUR READERS

Under the name of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS), the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts (Institute) supports study and research on the Book of Mormon, the Book of Abraham, the Old Testament, and the New Testament, studies of the early formative period of the Christian tradition, ancient temples, and other related subjects. Under the FARMS imprint, the Institute publishes and distributes titles in these areas for the benefit of scholars and interested Latter-day Saint readers. Primary FARMS research interests include the history, language, literature, culture, geography, politics, and law relevant to ancient scripture. Although such subjects are of secondary importance when compared with the spiritual and eternal messages of scripture, solid research and academic perspectives can supply certain kinds of useful information, even if only tentatively, concerning many significant and interesting questions about scripture.

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The principal purpose of the *FARMS Review* 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.

Reviews are written by invitation. Any person interested in writing a review should first contact the editor. Style guidelines will be sent to the reviewers.

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CONTENTS

Editor's Introduction, by Louis Midgley..... xi

The Book of Mormon

- Bradford, M. Gerald, and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds., *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*
(John A. Tvedtnes, "Reconstructing the Book of Mormon") 1
- Givens, Terryl L., *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*
(Noel B. Reynolds, "The Book of Mormon Today")..... 5
(John L. Sorenson, "A Rare Gem") 15
- Sorenson, John L., *Mormon's Map*
(Randall P. Spackman, "Interpreting Book of Mormon Geography")..... 19
- Article: John W. Welch, "How Much Was Known about Chiasmus in 1829 When the Book of Mormon Was Translated?" 47

The Book of Abraham

- Cottle, Thomas D., *The Papyri of Abraham: Facsimiles of the Everlasting Covenant*
(John Gee, "One Side of a Nonexistent Conversation") 81
- Nibley, Hugh, *Abraham in Egypt*
(Brian M. Hauglid, "Nibley's *Abraham in Egypt*: Laying the Foundation for Abraham Research")..... 87
- Tvedtnes, John A., Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*
(E. Douglas Clark, "A Powerful New Resource for Studying the Book of Abraham") 91

Responses to *The New Mormon Challenge*

- Finley, Thomas J., "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" In *The New Mormon Challenge*
- Shepherd, David J., "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudo-translation, and the Book of Mormon." In *The New Mormon Challenge*
(Kevin L. Barney, "A More Responsible Critique") 97
(John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, "One Small Step") 147
- Mosser, Carl, "Can the Real Problem of Evil Be Solved?" In *The New Mormon Challenge*
(Blake T. Ostler, "Evil: A Real Problem for Evangelicals")..... 201
- Owen, Paul, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness." In *The New Mormon Challenge*
(Barry R. Bickmore, "Of Simplicity, Oversimplification, and Monotheism")..... 215

Mormon Studies

- Abanes, Richard, *One Nation under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*
(Rockwell D. Porter, "A Dancer/Journalist's Anti-Mormon Diatribe") 259
- Hopkins, Richard R., *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God*
(Benjamin I. Huff, "How Polemicism Corrupted Latter-day Saint Apologetics")..... 273
- Petersen, LaMar, *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*
- Anderson, Robert D., *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*
- Vogel, Dan, "The Validity of the Witnesses' Testimonies." In *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*
(Larry E. Morris, "'The Private Character of the Man Who Bore That Testimony': Oliver Cowdery and His Critics") 311

Biblical Studies

- Parry, Donald W., *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources*
(Kevin L. Barney, “Isaiah Interwoven”) 353

Interfaith Studies

- Jospe, Raphael, Truman G. Madsen, and Seth Ward, eds., *Covenant
and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*
- Johnson, Frank J., and Rabbi William J. Leffler, *Jews and Mormons:
Two Houses of Israel*
- Lenowitz, Harris, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown
Heights*
(Jeffrey R. Chadwick, “Three Books on Jewish and
Mormon Themes”) 403
- Mackay, C. Reynolds, *Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith*
(Brian M. Hauglid, “*Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith:
A Sharp Stick in the Eye*”) 421

Scripture Aids

- Valletta, Thomas R., gen. ed., *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day
Saint Families*
- Valletta, Thomas R., gen. ed., *The New Testament for Latter-day
Saint Families*
(Rebecca M. Flinders and Anne B. Fairchild, “Scriptures
for Families”) 431

Book Notes

- Eliason, Eric A., ed., *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction
to an American World Religion* 435
- Hexham, Irving, *Pocket Dictionary of New Religious Movements* 436
- Hoskisson, Paul Y., ed., *Historicity and the Latter-day
Saint Scriptures* 436
- Newberg, Andrew, Eugene d’Aquili, and Vince Rause, *Why God
Won’t Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief* 437

| | |
|---|-----|
| Osborn, Joy M., <i>The Book of Mormon—The Stick of Joseph: Evidences That Prove the Book of Mormon to Be a True Record of a Remnant of Joseph</i> | 438 |
| Petersen, LaMar, <i>The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry</i> | 438 |
| Sillito, John, and Susan Staker, eds., <i>Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters</i> | 439 |
| Smith, Lucy Mack, <i>Lucy's Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith's Family Memoir</i> , edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson..... | 440 |
| <i>To All the World: The Book of Mormon Articles from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism</i> | 440 |
| Tolworthy, Chris, <i>The Bible Says 1830</i> | 441 |
| Waterman, Bryan, ed., <i>The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith</i> | 442 |

Index to FARMS Review of Books, 2002

| | |
|---------------------------------------|-----|
| By Author | 443 |
| By Title..... | 446 |
| By Reviewer..... | 448 |
| 2001 Book of Mormon Bibliography..... | 451 |
| About the Reviewers | 461 |

Editor's Introduction

ON CALIBAN MISCHIEF¹

Louis Midgley

With this issue, we change our name to *The FARMS Review* since we do more than publish commentaries on books.² There are other changes. Although we will continue to feature review essays more often than traditional book reviews, we will now begin to provide some brief book notes. These will, we hope, call the attention of the Saints to a literature they might otherwise not notice. Some of these briefly mentioned items may receive a more detailed examination later. This introduction also marks the first time that someone other than the founding editor of this *Review*, Daniel C. Peterson, has provided the introduction. Some of his introductions and his review essays have been memorable. I doubt that my efforts will approach the wit and wisdom that have been the hallmark of previous introductions.

For fourteen years this *Review* has, among other things, included responses to secular and sectarian anti-Mormon literature. Providing

1. *Caliban* is an allusive name used by William Shakespeare in *The Tempest* to identify a disposition or human type. This name seems to me to fit at least some of the anti-Mormon zealots in the countercult movement. The word *mischief* currently identifies a playful malice, but it once had a more ominous meaning, identifying a harm that, if not assuaged, could kill.

2. For example, we have even included a review of literature on chiasmus. See John W. Welch, "How Much Was Known about Chiasmus in 1829 When the Book of Mormon Was Translated?" in this number of the *FARMS Review*, pp. 47–80.

these responses, contrary to what some may imagine, is only a small part of the publication effort that appears under the imprint of FARMS. I believe we have served the kingdom well by doing so. Unfortunately, this has led some to imagine that FARMS is a kind of Latter-day Saint equivalent of their own unsavory operations, whatever they might be. This is a mistake, and it rivals the misunderstandings critics have of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints.

Only a few anti-Mormons seem to have read the literature published under the FARMS imprint. Some even boast that they have not read the literature they criticize. I have tried to change this by begging several “countercultists” to read and comment on some essays. I have even provided them with copies of some essays or issues of this *Review*. My efforts to force-feed countercultists have, however, failed. They eventually admitted that they had not read what I had sent. This is understandable, if not excusable, since they are busy lecturing in Protestant churches on, or ironically perhaps illustrating, what they call “Counterfeit Christianity.” We seem to face not a declining hostility from fundamentalist/evangelical sources, but a veritable menagerie of incorrigible Caliban.

Bearing False Witness

Thus far no book-length studies of the fundamentalist/evangelical countercult have appeared. In June 2003, Douglas Cowan, an assistant professor of religious studies and sociology at the University of Missouri-Kansas City, will publish *Bearing False Witness?*³—the title of which indicates something of his assessment of the countercult. The contents of this important book should shame morally serious

3. Douglas E. Cowan, *Bearing False Witness? An Introduction to the Christian Countercult* (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2003).

evangelicals. It may earn for him among countercultists a reputation as a dreaded “cult apologist.” Since I have seen only a prepublication copy of Cowan’s book,⁴ I will provide merely a brief précis.

Cowan’s assessment of the anti-Mormon portion of the countercult movement fully supports what Latter-day Saints know about it.⁵ However, Cowan advances significantly beyond Latter-day Saint understandings of the industry as a whole and offers intriguing explanations for both the existence and dynamics of the countercult movement. Latter-day Saints will no doubt find discussions of their favorite anti-Mormons in Cowan’s book, including, among others, Ed Decker, Bill Schnoebelen, Dave Hunt, James White, Robert A. Morey, Ron Rhodes, James R. Spencer, Hank Hanegraaff, John P. Morehead, Anton Hein, Matt Slick, Alan W. Gomes, Robert M. Bowman, Gordon R. Lewis, John Ankerberg and John Weldon, Gretchen and Bob Passantino, Bob Larson, Richard Abanes, and, of course, the late “Dr.” Walter R. Martin.

Cowan describes the constant, sometimes bitter, and always amusing internecine struggles that take place among countercultists. He also calls attention to the similarity of background assumptions and goals of countercultists, while noting, naturally, vast differences in their competence, intellectual capacities, and honesty. He points

4. I have, however, examined Cowan’s dissertation entitled “‘Bearing False Witness’: Propaganda, Reality-Maintenance, and Christian Anticult Apologetics” (Ph.D. diss., University of Calgary, 1999), which provided the groundwork for his book. I am also familiar with a number of his published and unpublished essays. With the late Jeffrey K. Hadden, he edited a series of insightful articles on *Religion on the Internet: Research Prospects and Promises* (New York: JAI, 2000).

5. Cowan’s treatment of the anti-Mormon element of the countercult is excellent even if it lacks some of the historical grounding and rich and subtle detail found in the remarkable study of literary anti-Mormonism by Terryl L. Givens; see *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

out that John P. Morehead⁶ and Craig Blomberg,⁷ as well as, of course, Carl Mosser and Paul Owen,⁸ have made some efforts to raise the intellectual bar for countercultists. In the final chapter of his book, Cowan wonders if Mosser and Owen will make careers out of their anti-Mormon sentiments. There is some evidence that they are moving in this direction. Mosser, with Blomberg and Beckwith, participated in a countercult conference titled “Christians in a World of New Religions,” held at Biola University in La Mirada, California, on 24–25 January 2003. This gathering of countercultists was sponsored by Concerned Christians and Former Mormons (Jim Robertson),⁹ Standing Together (Gregory Johnson), the Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, and the Christian Apologetics Program at Biola University. Some of the anti-Mormons scheduled to perform

6. Morehead is, among other things, the president of Evangelical Ministries to New Religions (EMNR), a consortium of countercult agencies. He has urged these agencies to clean up their act. In a controversial move, he invited Douglas Cowan to address an EMNR convention in an effort to inform countercultists of the seriousness of the problems they face. Cowan’s address at the EMNR conference held in Louisville, Kentucky, on 21–23 February 2002, is entitled “Apologia and Academia: Prospects for a Rapprochement?” and was available online at c.faculty.umkc.edu/cowande/emnr2002.htm as recently as 17 March 2003. Cowan described his experience at the EMNR convention in an address entitled “Reflections on Louisville: The Christian Countercult in Conversation,” a paper he read at the meeting of the Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR) held in Salt Lake City and Provo on 20–23 June 2002. This paper was available online at www.cesnur.org/2002/slc/cowan.htm as recently as 17 March 2003. My correspondence with Morehead suggests that he has in mind merely cosmetic changes in the countercult, and my suspicion is that he and his associates will reject the substance of Cowan’s book.

7. For a sample of his evangelical ideology, see Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997).

8. See Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich., Zondervan, 2002). See reviews of this book by Kevin Barney, John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, Blake T. Ostler, and Barry R. Bickmore in this number of the *FARMS Review*, pp. 97–258; and reviews by David L. Paulsen, Benjamin I. Huff, Kent P. Jackson, Louis Midgley, and Kevin Christensen in *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 99–221.

9. See, for example, the Web site of the Scholarly and Historical Information Exchange for Latter-day Saints for several sets of correspondence between Jim Robertson (and CCFR representatives) and others, available online at www.shields-research.org/Critics/CCoM.htm as recently as 17 March 2003.

at this conference included Kurt Van Gorden, Bill McKeever, Gregory Johnson, Robert Bowman, Cky Carrigan, Tal Davis, and Richard Abanes.¹⁰ Since, as Cowan demonstrates, internecine quarrels are a major feature of the countercult, it would be wrong to assume that these fellows agree on the details of how to attack the Church of Jesus Christ. And some of these countercultists may resent, if they understand the arguments, the criticism directed at their version of anti-Mormonism by Mosser and his associates.

Danse Macabre

We have included in this issue an essay responding to a bizarre journalistic history of the Church of Jesus Christ fashioned by Mr. Richard Abanes, who is a countercult journalist, as well as an accomplished singer and dancer. His 650-page book, entitled *One Nation under Gods*, contains nearly 150 pages of endnotes and five appendixes. It appears, at least on the surface, to be serious scholarship.¹¹ From our viewpoint, however, it is propaganda that has, for the most part, been borrowed from previously published anti-Mormon literature or from the array of Web sites currently providing grist for the anti-Mormon mill.

Abanes seems to have been troubled by an unfavorable review of his book written by Jana Riess for *Publisher's Weekly*, the leading publishing industry trade journal. In her review, Riess described the Abanes book as follows:

This heated diatribe by Abanes (whose previous books have attacked the New Age movement, the occult and Harry Potter) falls squarely into the category of agenda-driven exposé. "The history of Mormonism is rife with nefarious deeds, corruption, vice, and intolerance," he writes. "So far the fruits of Mormonism have included lust, greed, theft, fraud, violence,

10. The program for this conference could be accessed at www.emnr.org/conference.html as recently as 17 March 2003.

11. See the review of *One Nation under Gods*, by Richard Abanes, in this number of the *FARMS Review*, pp. 259–72.

murder, religious fanaticism, bribery, and racism.” Abanes’s tirade is virtually indistinguishable from the anti-Mormon literature of the past, except that he seems convinced he is revealing “new” information to readers who have been dangerously ignorant of the horrifying dark side of, say, the Osmond family.¹²

Abanes countered by claiming that *Publisher’s Weekly* should have provided a favorable review since others had already done so. To support this claim he quoted the promotional blurbs he had secured from his friends that appear on the dust jacket of his book. These were provided by Sandra Tanner of the anti-Mormon Utah Lighthouse Ministry, by Hank Hanegraaff of the anti-Mormon Christian Research Institute, and by Michael Shermer, the publisher of *Skeptic Magazine* and a friend of Abanes.¹³ In addition, he discovered that Riess had become a Latter-day Saint in 1993 and insinuated that she could not provide an impartial appraisal of his book. He thus implies that, unlike Riess, those anti-Mormons who provided promotional blurbs for his book are fully qualified, unbiased, impartial truth tellers.

Our review of *One Nation under Gods* is signed by “Rockwell D. Porter.” This is not, of course, the author’s real name. This essay was written by Latter-day Saint scholars from several disciplines, none of whom, for various reasons, are eager to be known as having given attention to this aggressively marketed, tendentious, and somewhat poorly edited, rather breezy 650-page diatribe.

One could complain about lacunae, distortions, and slanting on virtually every page of *One Nation under Gods*. The book is presented as history, but it is actually a lengthy rant about what Abanes calls

12. Jana Riess’s review of *One Nation under Gods* was found online at www.abanes.com/pwattack.html as recently as 17 March 2003. In its original presentation for *Publishers Weekly*, the review appeared with three other basically favorable reviews of books on Mormonism, two of which were not authored by Latter-day Saints.

13. Richard Abanes indicates that he is on the editorial board of this magazine, which is published by the Skeptic Society—founded and headed by Michael Shermer. See www.skeptic.com (as recently as 17 March 2003) for details on Shermer and his Skeptic Society.

“the cult of Mormonism.” The Saints, he imagines, are now striving to “appear Christian”¹⁴ when he is certain that they are not. In a rather bizarre passage, he insists that “the LDS hierarchy will have to at some point, once and for all, completely sever its ties with Christianity. Only by taking such an approach,” he opines, “will Mormonism be able to forever distance itself from the ‘cult’ label and claim for itself some degree of legitimacy and integrity in the eyes of many religious researchers, especially those adhering to the historic Christian faith.”¹⁵ It should be noted, though, that Abanes seems unwilling to grant “some measure of legitimacy and integrity” to Buddhists,¹⁶ even though they make no claims to being Christians. Abanes may merely be arguing that, if the Saints do not come to adopt his theology, whatever it may be, he and his countercult associates will continue to assert that the Church of Jesus Christ is not Christian but is a “cult.”

Is it possible that Abanes does not know that there is a shift among countercultists away from branding as “cultists” those one wishes to ridicule? He apparently did not notice, for example, that Richard Ostling, a religious journalist whom he quotes and cites, describes the word *cult* as “that slippery and all-purpose slur aimed at marginal faiths”¹⁷ and thus avoids that label when writing about the Church of Jesus Christ. More thoughtful critics of the church have begun to recognize the question-begging and conceptual ambiguity involved in the polemical use of the label *cult* and have substituted other expressions such as “new religious movement”—a much less

14. Richard Abanes, *One Nation under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church* (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002), 391.

15. *Ibid.*, 400.

16. See Abanes, “Buddhism,” in the most recent edition of Walter Martin’s *The Kingdom of the Cults*, ed. Hank Hanegraaff (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1997), 301–20. Abanes also contributed chapters on the so-called “New Age Cults,” and “The Apocalyptic Cults,” to Martin’s book, as well as stinging criticisms of Pentecostal/Charismatics such as Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, Morris Cerullo, and Kenneth Hagen. *Ibid.*, 333–49, 403–21, 495–516.

17. Richard N. and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1999), xx.

polemically potent label—to identify their targets and to avoid some of the embarrassing problems associated with the use of highly charged vocabulary.¹⁸ But, of course, even those who have tried to move beyond the use of crude labels have been adamant about the Church of Jesus Christ not being “Christian in any very useful or theologically significant sense.”¹⁹ Countercultists, it seems, may drop a pejorative label but still retain the substance of their prejudices. And please notice that even when they have moved away from labeling those they attack as *cultists*, they have proudly retained for themselves the label *countercultist*.²⁰

The Great Cult Scare

Three years ago, in a bookstore on Queen Street in Auckland, New Zealand, I noticed a handsome coffee-table book, printed on coated paper, entitled *Cults*.²¹ I could not resist purchasing it. Michael Jordan²²—not the basketball player—had graced this large-format, 144-page book with 139 sometimes stunning color photographs,

18. See, for example, Carl Mosser, “And the Saints Go Marching On,” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 410–11 n. 1.

19. *Ibid.*, 66.

20. In 1982, when Walter Martin and others hatched the consortium of countercults now known as Evangelical Ministries to New Religions, their undertaking was called Evangelical Ministries to Cults. This name seemed too abrasive and was changed in 1984, but the change was cosmetic, since they continue to emphasize the label countercult to describe their endeavors.

21. Michael Jordan, *Cults: From Bacchus to Heaven’s Gate* (London: Carlton Books, 1999). This may be a slightly different edition of *Cults: Prophecies, Practices and Personalities* (London: Carlton Books, 1996).

22. Some of Michael Jordan’s often heavily illustrated books include *Gods of the Earth: The Quest for the Mother Goddess and the Sacred King* (London: Bantam Books, 1992); *Encyclopedia of Gods: Over 2,500 Deities of the World* (London: Cathie, 1993); *Witches—An Encyclopedia of Paganism and Magic* (London: Cathie, 1998); *Islam: An Illustrated History* (London: Carlton Books, 2002); *Myths of the World: A Thematic Encyclopedia* (London: Cathie, 1993); *Nostradamus and the New Millennium: A Guide to the Great Seer’s Prophecies* (London: Carlton Books, 1998); *Eastern Wisdom: The Philosophies and Rituals of the East* (London: Marlow, 1998); *Mary: The Unauthorised Biography* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2001), which has been issued under the title *The Historical Mary: Revealing the Pagan Identity of the Virgin Mother* in February 2003, and so forth.

accompanied by brief descriptive passages. I noticed that he had included a section entitled “Quakers and Mormons,” in which he explains that one “Joseph F. Smith” founded in 1830 “an evangelical missionary sect” after receiving “visionary inspiration from the ancient prophet, Mormon.”²³ And “like the Quakers, he also espoused the practice of *glossolalia*, and instructed his followers to do so through highly organized ritual during which the individual would stand and pray in silence.”²⁴ I never previously knew that I have been speaking in tongues when I pray. A sidebar informs the reader that “on the death of Brigham Young they adopted the son of the founder, also called Joseph Smith, as their leader and rejected most of Young’s non-Christian doctrinal innovations.”²⁵

Jordan provides brief descriptions and photographs of Christian Scientists, Raelians, Manichaeans, Charles Manson, Essenes, David Berg’s Children of God (or Family of Love), Soka Gakkai, Knights of Columbus, the Unification Church of the Reverend Moon, Voodoo, Scientologists, Opus Dei, Albigensians, Druids, all kinds of Satanic sects (including the one started in 1856 by Eliphas Levi),²⁶ Rosicrucians, and on and on. There are, however, some surprising lacunae. For example, Jordan fails to mention the Way International and the Falun Gong.

Jordan indicates that the purpose of his book is to probe “the workings and mentality of cults” and also “to examine some of the personalities who invent and build off-beat religious movements.”²⁷ But if cults are merely “off-beat religious movements,” then “how does religion relate to, and differ from, the cult?”²⁸ Jordan notices that dictionaries provide “at least two definitions of the word cult.

23. Jordan, *Cults* (1999), 44.

24. *Ibid.*, 45.

25. *Ibid.*

26. *Ibid.*, 85. Eliphas Levi (born Alphonse Louis Constant), a former Roman Catholic priest, in 1856 turned the previously harmless Jewish and Christian pentagram into a ridiculous Satanic symbol.

27. Jordan, *Cults* (1999), 6.

28. *Ibid.*, 9.

Primarily it is a system of religious belief, a formal style of worship. Only secondarily is it a sect or an unorthodox or false religion.”²⁹ The primary definition is, of course, grounded in the original use and meaning of the word. Jordan seems to know this. If, as he maintains, “a cult provided the mainstream form of worship for a community” in the ancient world and “religion was part of the nuts and bolts of earthly existence to the peoples of the ancient world,”³⁰ then it follows that, whenever we label something a *cult*, we can substitute the word *religion*. Indeed, our word *cult* comes from the Latin *cultus*. From the agricultural sense of this root, we obtain common, useful words: We thus *cultivate* arable land (hence *agriculture*), and we have a *culture*. Or we can become *cultured*; we *cultivate* this and that. A variety of apple like a Pacific Rose is an especially good *cultivar*, and so forth.

Thus, though the word *cult* was until rather recently a harmless, even useful, word and remains so in a number of academic disciplines, the word was given a radically different, highly pejorative meaning by ranting preachers, with uninformed journalists trailing behind. And we have subsequently had a series of cult scares beginning in the 1960s. When and why did *cult* take on its current secondary meaning of “unorthodox or false religion” rather than identifying the “mainstream form of worship for a community”?³¹ Jordan, of course, has no idea. His *Cults* is merely a slick potboiler pandering to the popular fascination with cults and religious exotica.³² It is only recently that

29. Ibid.

30. Ibid.

31. Ibid.

32. But others see him differently. Hence the following: “Michael Jordan is not only an expert in ancient religions and mythology,” according to his literary agent, who points out that he has written “such works as *Gods of the Earth* and the *Encyclopedia of Gods*, but he has also completed a substantial amount of work on natural history including *Plants of Magic and Mystery* [2001] and a comprehensive *Encyclopedia of Fungi* [1995] found in Europe and the UK. He has also been a television presenter and is best known as the face of Mushroom Magic, which he also wrote [1989]. He is the country’s leading mycologist and is greatly respected in both of his chosen fields.” This blurb was available online at www.watsonlittle.net/author.asp?authorId=96 as recently as 17 March 2003.

anyone bothered to identify who, when, and why someone launched the vulgar secondary meaning of the word.

Religious Bigotry in the American Past and Present

Philip Jenkins, who is a professor of history and religious studies at Pennsylvania State University, recently enhanced his now thriving publishing career and launched something of a scandal with a book entitled *Pedophiles and Priests*.³³ He has subsequently turned his attention to what he calls the “anti-cult” movement.³⁴ In what amounts to “the first full account of cults and anti-cult scares in American history,”³⁵ Jenkins shows that public panic over fringe or new religious movements did not begin in the 1960s, when the late Walter Martin’s ranting became popular along the margins of conservative Protestantism and the countercult, as we now know it, was born. Instead, many of the images and stereotypes used against a variety of new religions “are traceable to the mid-nineteenth century when Mormons, Freemasons, and even Catholics were vehemently denounced for supposed ritualistic violence, fraud, and sexual depravity.”³⁶ The recent book by Abanes shows that these charges have not gone out of fashion among countercultists.

Jenkins demonstrates that “Baptists, Quakers, Pentecostals, and Methodists” were also once pilloried and persecuted in much the same way that Latter-day Saints are, though they were not labeled cults. “Apparently the first book title to use the word [*cult*] in its modern [secondary pejorative] sense was the 1898 study of *Anti-Christian Cults* by A. H. Barrington, an Episcopal minister in Wisconsin.”³⁷

33. See Philip Jenkins, *Pedophiles and Priests: Anatomy of a Contemporary Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

34. See Philip Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs: Cults and New Religions in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

35. *Ibid.*, dust jacket.

36. *Ibid.*

37. *Ibid.*, 49, citing Arthur H. Barrington’s *Anti-Christian Cults* (Milwaukee: Young Churchman, 1898).

Jenkins holds that the novel, polemical use of the word *cult* has been *cultivated* by factions of Christians who consider themselves authoritative gatekeepers of the orthodox religion. “Already by the 1920s, the word ‘cult’ had acquired virtually all its modern freight: it described small religious groups with highly unorthodox ideas.”³⁸ He sketches a process by which new or marginal religious groups, if they survive initial hostility, enter the religious mainstream. Thus,

While it is possible still today to find books attacking these sects in the standard anticult language, this literature has become more scarce and is usually confined to the shelves of fundamentalist Christian bookstores. In fact, any writer today describing Mormons or Christian Scientists as cultists would immediately be marked as an unreconstructed fundamentalist.³⁹

In an ironic way, at least when dealing with the vast bulk of sectarian anti-Mormonism, Jenkins might be right. Why? For the most part it is “unreconstructed fundamentalists,” and not presumably genuine evangelicals, who target the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. These Caliban tend to staff the agencies of what is now widely known as the *countercult* movement since the term *anticult* is now mostly set aside for secular rather than sectarian religious bigotry. Jenkins, however, underestimates the scope and tenacity of the Caliban. When the leaders of the Southern Baptist Convention officially came to embrace and promote anti-Mormonism, the Saints were faced with the propaganda resources of a wealthy, large, tenacious institution. This challenges the notion that over time some new religions, if they weather an initial storm, even in their uniqueness, become part of some presumed Christian mainstream.

38. Jensen, *Mystics and Messiahs*, 69.

39. *Ibid.*, 68. Jenkins has just published a book entitled *The New Anti-Catholicism: The Last Acceptable Prejudice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003). As the subtitle indicates, Jenkins does not understand either the extent or the acceptability, even in otherwise polite society, of the vivid and even rabid expression of anti-Mormon sentiments.

Jenkins shows that, even though the first use of the word *cult* in its current pejorative sense can be traced no further back than 1898, it is wrong to “assume that the idea of cults is relatively modern; in fact it has deep roots in American history.”⁴⁰ From the beginning, marginal religious groups were reviled, persecuted, and harassed by their larger, more powerful rivals. Even though the specific terminology has shifted over time, the underlying substance of religious bigotry has remained remarkably similar. Though his study of sectarian religious warfare in American history and of contemporary anticult activity is valuable, Jenkins has not appreciated some recent developments. He is, of course, aware that sociologists have, in part for reasons I have already set out, tended to shift away from talking about *cults* to the somewhat more neutral, less pejorative label “new religious movements.” But he seems unaware that even those he labels *unreconstructed fundamentalists*—those Caliban—have also tended to abandon for polemical purposes the use of the previously harmless word *cult*. They also seem to have followed sociologists in substituting *new religious movement* for *cult* in their polemics, but only partially and not even consistently. They have, however, somewhat ironically, adopted the label *countercultists* to describe themselves, even when at least a few of them have more or less ceased to employ the label *cult*. They blast away at the faith of those to whom, for theological reasons, they refuse to grant the name Church of Jesus Christ. Here we face some incoherence, if not legerdemain.

When we encounter the mischief of the sectarian countercult, we are not witnessing a performance by some of the king’s players. Instead, what we face are often quite brutish, vulgar types right from the streets. These Caliban, as Douglas Cowan has amply demonstrated, strut on their little stages—pretending to have expert qualifications or even sometimes sporting phony credentials—while they pose as staunch defenders of the orthodox religion. They are not the pure in heart who long for or are open to further light and knowledge, but instead are mere mercenaries in the business of selling something. Their audience is primarily not the Latter-day

40. Jenkins, *Mystics and Messiahs*, 4.

Saints, but their easily frightened fellow fundamentalists; their function is thus the maintenance of their own sectarian boundaries. Some have done well by taking over from or imitating the late Walter Martin, the veritable father of the sectarian countercult—the now departed but not entirely forgotten Iago of that business.⁴¹ But, as Cowan has shown, there are many others, some even less principled, who are scrambling to take his place.

I trust that these brief remarks about the Caliban will have signaled my low opinion of the countercult industry as a whole and of the anti-Mormon faction in particular. But I do not imagine that countercultists are entirely representative of conservative Protestants, some of whose scholarly opinions I rather admire.

Countercult Notions Seep into Serious Evangelical Scholarship

I am pleased that some evangelical and other scholars now employ a social analogy to describe the Trinity. I rather like this understanding of the divine economy, and I believe that other Latter-day Saints do as well.⁴² Some Protestant writers seem willing to grant that what is now thought of as the “orthodoxy” of Nicea, and later Chalcedon, was actually preceded by a plethora of heresies, that is, by a variety of somewhat different ways of understanding divine things, each of which presumably had its roots in the Bible. One evangelical author put it this way: “Heresy is the mother of orthodoxy.”⁴³ After the point when, the Saints believe, the prophetic lights went out,⁴⁴ what is now known as the “orthodox” doctrine of the Trinity was forged in

41. See Louis Midgley, “A ‘Tangled Web’: The Walter Martin Miasma,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 371–434.

42. On 29 March 2003, Daniel C. Peterson delivered a paper on social trinitarianism, “Mormonism and the Trinity,” at a conference entitled “God, Humanity, and Revelation: Perspectives from Mormon Philosophy and History,” held at the Yale Divinity School, 27–29 March 2003.

43. Roger E. Olson and Christopher A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2002), 2.

44. See Hugh W. Nibley, *When the Lights Went Out: Three Studies on the Ancient Apostasy* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001).

the heat of fierce controversies between competing understandings of language found in the Bible. By contrast, the idea of a social trinity is not unlike LDS understandings. I am also attracted to the so-called openness-of-God views of writers like Clark Pinnock, John Sanders, Gregory Boyd, and David Basinger.⁴⁵ By various means these writers challenge crucial elements of classical theism in much the same way and for some of the same reasons that Latter-day Saints do.

I have enjoyed some of the work of Stanley Grenz and Roger Olson.⁴⁶ In his history of Christian theology, Olson does not hide, downplay, or explain away the fact that many highly influential Christian theologians—Augustine being a prime example—borrowed categories from pagan sources, especially from Neoplatonism (and Stoicism). Nor does Olson seem to privilege the speculation of Augustine and Calvin. He therefore does not insist that their opinions are necessarily the key to reading the scriptures.⁴⁷ Latter-day Saints, besieged by fundamentalist critics who insist that they speak for historic, trinitarian, orthodox, biblical Christianity (as if there had always been one fixed set of teachings), can learn from Olson's latest book, written from an Arminian rather than from an Augustinian/Calvinist (or what Olson tends to call monergist) perspective. Olson describes the diversity of opinion among Christians then and now on a host of crucial issues.⁴⁸

45. See especially John Sanders, *The God Who Risks: A Theology of Providence* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1998), but also the essays included in Clark H. Pinnock et al., *The Openness of God: A Biblical Challenge to the Traditional Understanding of God* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1994); and David Basinger, *The Case for Freewill Theism: A Philosophical Assessment* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1996). For a somewhat more accessible treatment of the topic, see Gregory A. Boyd, *God of the Possible: A Biblical Introduction to the Open View of God* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 2000). Also of interest is Clark H. Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2001). I wish to thank David Paulsen for calling this remarkable book to my attention.

46. See, for example, Stanley J. Grenz and Roger E. Olson, *Twentieth-Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1992).

47. See Roger E. Olson, *The Story of Christian Theology: Twenty Centuries of Tradition and Reform* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1999).

48. See Roger E. Olson, *The Mosaic of Christian Belief: Twenty Centuries of Unity and Diversity* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2002). There are also two intriguing series of

Of course, he insists that there is a kind of underlying unity behind all this conflict and diversity. But the unity he finds is the kind that is constituted by, in his controlling analogy, the different, contrasting pieces that make up a mosaic—hence *The Mosaic of Christian Belief*. Olson does not press his analogy of a mosaic unity. Instead, he holds that much of the diversity of beliefs is on presumably secondary matters. But it is unclear what distinguishes the primary from the secondary. There is, Olson asserts, a loose kind of consensus on what he labels key issues, bare essentials, fundamental beliefs, the core of beliefs. But he struggles to identify what constitutes this core. His celebration of the range of diversity renders problematic his rhetoric about a core. Olson enthusiastically endorses *Across the Spectrum*,⁴⁹ a useful book setting out the “diversity of views that comprise evangelicalism.”⁵⁰ The authors of this book, of course, insist that “evangelicals are united

books setting out this diversity of opinion among evangelicals on various presumably “secondary” issues. See, for example, from Zondervan in Grand Rapids, Michigan, Wayne A. Grudem, ed., *Are Miraculous Gifts for Today? Four Views* (1996); Melvin E. Dieter, ed., *Five Views on Sanctification* (1996); Dennis L. Okholm and Timothy R. Phillips, eds., *Four Views on Salvation in a Pluralistic World* (1996); Wayne G. Strickland, ed., *Five Views on Law and Gospel* (1996); William V. Crockett, ed., *Four Views on Hell* (1997); C. Marvin Pate, ed., *Four Views on the Book of Revelation* (1998); James P. Morehead and John M. Reynolds, eds., *Three Views on Creation and Evolution* (1999); Darrell L. Bock, ed., *Three Views on the Millennium and Beyond* (1999); Steven B. Cowan, ed., *Five Views on Apologetics* (2000); J. Matthew Pinson, ed., *Four Views on Eternal Security* (2002). Some titles in the competing series by InterVarsity in Downers Grove, Illinois, include Robert G. Clouse, ed., *The Meaning of the Millennium: Four Views* (1977); David Basinger and Randall Basinger, eds., *Predestination and Free Will: Four Views of Divine Sovereignty and Human Freedom* (1986); Donald L. Alexander, ed., *Christian Spirituality: Five Views of Sanctification* (1989); Gabriel Fackre, Ronald H. Nash, and John Sanders, eds., *What about Those Who Have Never Heard? Three Views on the Destiny of the Unevangelized* (1995); Edward W. Fudge and Robert A. Peterson, eds., *Two Views of Hell: A Biblical and Theological Debate* (2000); James K. Beilby and Paul R. Eddy, eds., *Divine Foreknowledge: Four Views* (2001); Gregory E. Ganssle, ed., *Four Views on God and Time* (2001).

49. Gregory A. Boyd and Paul R. Eddy, *Across the Spectrum: Understanding Issues in Evangelical Theology* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2002). Olson’s endorsement is found on the cover. This book consists of eighteen chapters describing competing evangelical beliefs; an appendix discussing twelve additional issues was available for downloading at www.bakeracademic.com/acrossthespectrum as recently as 17 March 2003.

50. Boyd and Eddy, *Across the Spectrum*, 6.

in their commitment to the core beliefs of historic Christianity as expressed in the ecumenical creeds.”⁵¹ And they also claim a “common ground” or “center” around which contrasts over a wide range of issues are currently being debated. They indicate that these “core beliefs,” which they do not identify, are shared by evangelicals “over against non-evangelicals and/or non-Christian perspectives.”⁵² But they also grant that “there is, of course, no universally accepted definition of ‘evangelicalism.’”⁵³ This is obvious, and I therefore suspect that those with a radical Calvinist ideology are not likely to accept varying views on the issues considered in *Across the Spectrum* nor on what constitutes historic Christianity. Rather, they would minimize or deny much of the diversity that others see as part of the umbrella of competing contemporary evangelical beliefs.

Even with the vast range of opinions that he describes, Olson does not believe that everything that anyone has ever believed is part of what he considers “authentic Christianity.” Along with his notion of a diverse mosaic,⁵⁴ he strives to limit the range of permissible diversity. “Without that unifying core of ideas anyone and everyone who claimed the label *Christian* and appealed to Jesus Christ and the Bible would have to be accepted as truly and equally Christian.”⁵⁵ To grant such a notion would make Olson a target for fundamentalists on the fringe of conservative Protestantism. Instead, he appeals to what he calls “the Great Tradition of the Christian church’s unified teachings stretching from the second century into the twentieth century (but especially formulated in the crucial stages of the first few centuries and the sixteenth century when the reformations took place).”⁵⁶ This so-called Great Tradition “help[s] us determine which

51. *Ibid.*, 7.

52. *Ibid.*, 8.

53. *Ibid.*, 7.

54. The meaning of a mosaic does not need, nor is it dependent upon, a core, though the individual pieces may have what could be called family resemblances.

55. Olson, *Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 32.

56. *Ibid.*, 33. Notably, by beginning in the second century, Olson seems to have excluded the century of Jesus and the apostles.

beliefs matter the most and which are secondary or even further removed from the heart of Christian faith itself.”⁵⁷ How does Olson identify key elements within the vast mosaic of completing beliefs—the “bare essentials,” without which there would be no meaning at all in the mosaic? How can one identify this Great Tradition in the midst of the vast diversity? Olson asks: “What is the Great Tradition? Where is it found? What does it include?”⁵⁸ His answer is revealing: “The Great Tradition is a relatively nebulous phenomenon.”⁵⁹ Are there any answers? There is, it appears, at least one—it is the dogma that everything that God could possibly reveal is already found in the Bible alone. This he calls the sufficiency of scripture. But the Bible has to be interpreted, and it is precisely this fact that has generated the diversity he describes. The nebulous notion of the sufficiency of scripture is unfortunately invoked to denounce the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

Olson’s own views are staunchly Arminian since he rejects the notion of a limited atonement—one that saves only those predestined to salvation at the very moment of creation—and allows, instead, that anyone who genuinely and fully responds in faith to the gospel can be justified. He is, on this and some other issues, I believe, currently in a minority and on the defensive, especially among fundamentalist/evangelical preachers. His book is a celebration of diversity at least in part, I believe, in an effort to warrant his own “heresies” in the face of radically contrasting and competing Calvinist dogmas. Those he labels fundamentalists—that is, those who insist on “militantly enforced doctrinal uniformity”⁶⁰—tend to anathematize his approach to theology. But Olson unfortunately borrows the label *cult* from countercultists, which they invoke in order to enforce a uniformity that he eschews. Be that as it may, it turns out that the beliefs that go beyond the diversity Olson cherishes do so by flaunting the dogma of

57. Ibid.

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid.

60. Ibid., 32.

the sufficiency of scripture. This dogma, he claims, “helps distinguish counterfeit forms of Christianity such as the cults from groups and movements that differ from each other in secondary ways but equally affirm the core of apostolic Christian ideas.”⁶¹

Olson then takes a gratuitous jab at the Church of Jesus Christ: “Mormons appeal to the Bible and Jesus Christ (as well as their own additional sources) to promote their own . . . denials of God’s transcendence (wholly and holy otherness).”⁶² So it appears that, for Olson, unless one subscribes to the notion that God is a kind of wholly transcendent, impassive First Thing, one is a counterfeit Christian. What happened to the give-and-take between God and human beings that can be seen on virtually every page of the Bible? As Olson explains elsewhere, Christians eventually borrowed heavily from elements of Greek philosophy. It was from such categories that they fashioned the notion that God is a “simple substance, completely free of body, parts or passions, immutable (unchangeable) and eternal (timeless). He (or it) is everything that finite creation is not.”⁶³ Put another way, the God of classical theism is *ganz anders* or “wholly other.” With half-understood pagan categories, Christian theologians eventually set out their understanding of the attributes of God; these constitute the substance of classical theism. God is thus pictured as Being-Itself—the ground of finite things, and hence something like the nontemporal and nonspatial First Thing about which Greek philosophers speculated. Why must the notion that God is wholly other define authentic Christianity?

Olson also explains that “more conservative Protestants have generally feared that any belief in or practice of continuing revelations from God might lead into cultish aberrations such as the unusual beliefs held by certain sects on the fringes of Christianity that are based largely on ‘new prophecies’ delivered by modern religious leaders breaking out of the mainstream of traditional

61. Ibid., 33.

62. Ibid., 32.

63. Olson, *Story of Christian Theology*, 57.

Christianity.”⁶⁴ But Olson is aware that Wayne Grudem, a prominent contemporary evangelical theologian, “promotes belief in continuing revelation through modern-day prophecies.”⁶⁵ What distinguishes Grudem’s rejection of various forms of cessationist ideology—since he passionately insists that something like divine special revelations are or ought to be present today⁶⁶—from the aberrations of so-called counterfeit Christianity about which Olson complains? The answer is that, despite his insistence that the gift of prophecy is or should still be present among Christians, Grudem will not allow prophets to supplement what is found in the scriptures—he remains locked into the Bible-alone ideology typical of Protestantism.

God might, Grudem grants, give some “specific directions to individual persons,” but the dogma of the sufficiency of scripture “guarantees that God will not give any new revelation in this age that adds to *the moral standards that he requires for all Christians to obey during the church age.*”⁶⁷ Suppose, though, we grant that something like this may be true. Would it not still be possible for God to provide additional sacred writings that assist us in understanding his will and ways? Or that help us overcome misunderstandings we have of his original revelation even as that is set forth in the Bible? Grudem does not think so. Why? For one thing, he opines, “we have certainty that the Bible is from God,” but he does “not think that in this age anyone can ever have the certainty that such additional directions are from God.”⁶⁸ For Grudem, the “sufficiency of scripture” means that the Bible contains everything that God intends his people to ever have. What follows from this dogma is that it is only in the scriptures that “we are to search for God’s word to us” and thus not

64. Olson, *Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 85.

65. *Ibid.*, 86.

66. See Wayne Grudem, *The Gift of Prophecy in the New Testament and Today*, rev. ed. (Wheaton, Ill.: Crossway Books, 2000). His analysis of the biblical materials that support the idea of the prophetic gifts among authentic Saints is at least as exhaustive as that of any Latter-day Saint.

67. *Ibid.*, 257.

68. *Ibid.*

in continuing revelation.⁶⁹ And, he adds, “it also reminds us that God considers what he has told us in the Bible to be enough for us.”⁷⁰ Oh really? How do we know this to be true? Because the Bible tells us? Or because God has subsequently revealed this to prophets outside the Bible? It turns out that the notion of the sufficiency of scripture is a slogan that plays a role among some Christians. And it had its beginning in the Reformation quarrel with Roman Catholics.

And it also turns out that this maxim strips from God the possibility that he can and will provide genuine guidance, instruction, correction, information, or further light and knowledge that is of any genuine substance or significance. In addition, despite Grudem’s proof texts, the notion of the sufficiency of scripture is itself not biblical.⁷¹ But Grudem, like countercultists blasting away at Latter-day Saints, begs all the crucial questions: “The sufficiency of Scripture reminds us that we are to add nothing to Scripture, and that we are to consider no other writings of equal value to Scripture. This implication is violated by almost all cults and sects. Mormons claim to believe the Bible, for example, but also claim divine authority for the *Book of Mormon*.”⁷² Grudem’s dogmatic objection to the Book of Mormon turns out to be an extension of his objections to Roman Catholic reliance on what they call tradition. But this form of anti-Catholic rhetoric is not consistent with Roger Olson’s more subtle treatment of the role of tradition in both Roman Catholic and Protestant thought. For Olson, if there is no tradition to guide us on at least fundamental issues, anything goes, since the Bible can be made to say just about anything. Rather than relying on the Bible

69. Ibid., 258.

70. Ibid.

71. Grudem cites 2 Timothy 3:15; James 1:18; and 1 Peter 1:23. These passages he feels provide the necessary biblical grounds upon which the notion of the sufficiency of scripture can be made to rest. But none of these make reference to the New Testament or restrict God to what is currently found in the Bible. Why? No reference in the New Testament to the scriptures can possibly refer to the New Testament, which was not then in some cases even written or assembled or made into the Christian canon.

72. Grudem, *Gift of Prophecy*, 263.

alone, Olson is in thrall to what he calls the Great Tradition, which he thinks at least helps to fix the norms of Christian faith.⁷³

I have drawn attention to some remarks by evangelical theologians to indicate that even among an elite of conservative Protestants there is a borrowing and imitation of common inauthentic countercult objections to the faith of the Saints.

Negotiating a Surrender or Building Bridges?

I admire those who are skilled at building bridges of understanding with those of other faiths, whether secular or sectarian. I have undertaken some of this myself. My endeavor has always been to present the faith of the Saints as clearly and fully as possible to anyone who seemed willing to listen. My experience has been that the least receptive to my efforts have been those with Protestant fundamentalist leanings.

Recently, countercultists and a few morally serious evangelicals have expressed the belief that the Saints are making an effort to gain their approval by emphasizing our commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior⁷⁴ and that the Saints thus want to be included in their club. This has led some evangelicals to imagine that they are conducting a kind of interfaith dialogue with the Saints. Some have thought that the way to have a conversation with the Saints—what they wrongly imagine to be an interfaith dialogue—was by publishing

73. Olson, *Mosaic of Christian Belief*, 99–105.

74. I have heard talk since the late 1940s that the Saints have felt a need to emphasize Jesus. This seems to me, as I look back, to have been an effort by the faithful to counter what I have come to call cultural Mormonism. This essentially secular ideology emphasized, in its most thoughtful form, a kind of then trendy life-affirming optimism, a faith in an inevitable human progress, and hence a faith in man in the face of the abundance of moral evil in the world. When some of those on the fringes of the Mormon intellectual community, who often have the ear of the media, proclaim that they can see no place for a redemption from sin, is it any wonder that the Saints have emphasized Jesus as the Messiah, Lord, and Savior? This is a reaffirmation of the faith and not a radically new departure. What is new is a turn to the Book of Mormon for more than a sign that the heavens are open once again.

a book complaining about our noncreedal worldview or by attacking the Book of Mormon, even while refusing to use the name Church of Jesus Christ on theological grounds. These individuals started out with a measure of goodwill among at least a few LDS intellectuals, much of which they now seem to me to have squandered.

Other more mature and sophisticated evangelicals, however, seem to have initiated a private conversation with some Latter-day Saints. They seem to sense that public attacks on the faith of the Saints will not accomplish their goal, which is, I suspect, the evangelization of the Church of Jesus Christ. They may hope that with private, civil conversations they can begin a discreet process much like the one that led to the eventual negotiated surrender to evangelicals by Seventh-day Adventist leaders, which began in the late 1950s.

Massimo Introvigne, much like Philip Jenkins, argues that new religious groups, “if they are not destroyed by initial opposition,” may “move slowly towards the mainline.”⁷⁵ The reason is that pejorative “labels like ‘cult,’ ‘heresy’ or even ‘religion’ do not correspond to any intrinsic essence of a group or movement,” but instead they “are politically negotiated.” And at some point this “may involve a dialogue with traditional opponents.” According to Introvigne, some private negotiations resulted in the inclusion of the Seventh-day Adventist movement within the larger evangelical movement or as another divergent element under the evangelical umbrella.

Adventist intellectuals started a dialogue with Evangelical anti-cultists (and notorious anti-Mormon) Walter Martin in the 1950s. Martin was gradually persuaded that Adventists were not a cult, and was later instrumental in making them more or less accepted by the Evangelical community. The dialogue started privately by a few Adventist intellectuals was later endorsed by the Adventist leadership.

75. Massimo Introvigne’s review of *How Wide the Divide?* was available on his Center for Studies on New Religions (CESNUR) Web site: www.cesnur.org/testi/morm_02.htm as recently as 17 March 2003. All subsequent quotations from Introvigne are from this source.

Introvigne supposes that, with the publication of *How Wide the Divide?* “something similar to the Adventist-Evangelical private dialogue of the 1950s is now beginning between Evangelicals and Mormons.” The question that remains, according to Introvigne, is whether the Brethren will “pay attention to and somewhat sponsor this dialogue.” Are the Brethren prepared, Introvigne asks, “without compromising the integrity of the LDS faith or changing any doctrine, to present this faith to the world taking into account that a certain kind of missionary style is particularly offensive to Evangelicals and other Christians in general?”⁷⁶ Introvigne is not sure whether the current private conversations will bring the Church of Jesus Christ “into the Christian mainline, thus further marginalizing anti-Mormonism and reducing it (as is contemporary anti-Adventism) to a small, lunatic fringe.” Those evangelicals who now seek such a conversation may assume that what the Saints believe is in flux and also that we desire or somehow need their approval or acceptance—perhaps to avoid anti-Mormon antics—and hence that we can and will adjust our beliefs (or what Carl Mosser calls our “worldview”) to satisfy their demands.

It is safe to say, however, that Latter-day Saint intellectuals enjoy conversations with those of differing faiths, especially when the tone is civil. And there is nothing in principle wrong with seeking to build some bridges with civil evangelicals. I could, of course, enjoy such conversations with evangelicals, especially if they were held in Newport, Rhode Island, or the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, or some other pleasant place, and if someone else would pay my way. I would not, of course, be interested in or authorized to negotiate a surrender, though I would not mind baptizing some evangelicals.⁷⁷

Conversational civility in such situations, though not to be undervalued, can easily be misunderstood. Some evangelicals may have wrongly assumed that an interfaith dialogue is beginning to take place with Latter-days Saints that will eventually lead to radical

76. A large concern of fundamentalist/evangelicals is the Latter-day Saint missionary endeavor. It is seen not as witnessing to the heathens but as proselytizing, or “sheep stealing.”

77. I have no interest in debates with countercult Caliban in which points are presumably being scored.

changes on our part that in turn will make it possible for evangelicals to count the Saints as members of their club. But we are not about to modify our faith to fit evangelical notions of Christian orthodoxy. Instead, we earnestly seek for others to have a more adequate understanding of our faith. If some evangelicals now imagine that they can somehow accomplish with the Church of Jesus Christ what they managed to negotiate with Adventist leaders, they have not begun to understand the faith of the Saints.

And, it must be added, little is gained from conversations with those of a competing faith when they are in an attack mode. Carl Mosser and his associates seem to me to have failed to understand this. So, from a Latter-day Saint perspective (which is what counts on this issue), what they have produced is a somewhat better informed, less abrasive, and more refined version of what we have faced from the beginning.

A Gentle Reminder

When I hear it said that Saints should not respond to either our sectarian or secular critics, I am reminded of a line from Leo Strauss, who complained about the stance taken by those who, when faced with an intractable enemy of truth and virtue, “unhesitatingly prefer surrender.” Strauss did not think such a stance was demonic—“it has no attributes peculiar to fallen angels,” nor is it even “Neroian. Nevertheless one may say of it that it fiddles while Rome burns. It can be excused by two facts; it does not know that it fiddles, and it does not know that Rome burns.”⁷⁸ Many of the Saints seem satisfied to sit in a kind of stupor of thought while our critics seek to impede the growth of the kingdom. To ignore this fact is to place one’s head in the sand. Are we not under an “imperative duty” to defend the kingdom (D&C 123:7, 9, 11)? Have not the Saints been warned that “there is much which lieth in futurity, pertaining to the saints, which depends upon these things” (D&C 123:15)? Are we not warned that these are not to be counted “as small things” (D&C 123:15)?

78. Leo Strauss, *Liberalism Ancient and Modern* (New York: Basic Books, 1968), 223.

Editor's Picks, by Daniel C. Peterson

As we have done for the past several years, we now list those texts or items treated in the present issue of the *FARMS Review* that we feel we can recommend to our readers. The sheer fact of recommendation is the crucial thing; the inescapably subjective rankings below might have varied somewhat with different atmospheric pressure, a better night's sleep, or a less sugar-rich breakfast menu. My opinions rest, in some cases, on personal and direct acquaintance with the materials in question. In every instance, I have fixed the rankings after reading the relevant reviews and after further conversations either with the reviewers or with those who assist in the editing of the *Review*. But the final judgments, and the final blame for making them, are mine. This is how the rating system works:

- **** Outstanding, a seminal work of the kind that appears only rarely
- *** Enthusiastically recommended
- ** Warmly recommended
- * Recommended

So, in the hope that this list might be useful to busy readers, here are the items that we feel we can recommend from the present issue of the *FARMS Review*:

- **** Terry L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*
- **** John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*
- *** M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds., *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*
- ** Raphael Jospe, Truman G. Madsen, and Seth Ward, eds., *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*
- ** Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*
- ** John L. Sorenson, *Mormon's Map*

- * Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources*
- * Thomas R. Valletta, gen. ed., *The Book of Mormon (and New Testament) for Latter-day Saint Families*

Finally, we wish to express our gratitude to the reviewers for their efforts in evaluating the items that we have asked them to examine. Shirley S. Ricks, our production editor, did most of the real work in getting the reviews ready for publication. Alison V. P. Coutts, the director of publications for FARMS and for the Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts, offered useful comments and criticism. Additional thanks go to Andrew Livingston for our new cover design, to Elizabeth W. Watkins for her insightful observations, to Paula Hicken for directing the source checking and proofreading, to Amy Spittler and Jacob Rawlins for their typesetting skills, and to Julie Dozier, Tessa Hauglid, Ellen Henneman, David Pendleton, Linda Sheffield, and Sandra Thorne for their competent assistance. We are indebted to each of them for their contributions.

RECONSTRUCTING THE BOOK OF MORMON

John A. Tvedtnes

In October 2001, FARMS and other BYU entities sponsored a symposium marking the publication of the first volumes of Royal Skousen's critical text study of the original and printer's manuscripts of the Book of Mormon.¹ M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts prepared the symposium papers for publication in a seventy-four-page booklet sent to all FARMS subscribers and made available for purchase by others.

Skousen's introductory paper details the history of the critical text project of the Book of Mormon from its inception in 1988 until the present. Skousen describes how he was granted access to the manuscripts, including fragments in private collections. He illustrates the differences between the manuscripts and published editions, noting the kinds of errors that often occurred when taking dictation, hand copying from a manuscript, and typesetting in the nineteenth century.

1. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001); and *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 2 parts (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002).

Review of M. Gerald Bradford and Alison V. P. Coutts, eds. *Uncovering the Original Text of the Book of Mormon: History and Findings of the Critical Text Project*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002. vi + 74 pp. \$9.95.

The paper by Robert J. Espinosa of BYU's Harold B. Lee Library describes the fragments of the original manuscript and the process by which they were opened and photographed for study. His detailed explanation is accompanied by photos that bring the project to life for the reader.

Ron Romig, archivist for the Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints), describes the printer's manuscript, which is owned by that church and was made available for photography and study for the critical text project. Larry W. Draper, curator in the Harold B. Lee Library, described various Book of Mormon editions. His article is accompanied by excellent drawings that illustrate the printing process used during the nineteenth century.

The next chapter in the booklet—and the one that most interested me—is Royal Skousen's "The Systematic Text of the Book of Mormon." In this paper, Skousen describes some of the apparent errors that appear in published editions of the Book of Mormon, comparing them with the text as found in the manuscripts and recommending various emendations as a preview of what will be included in subsequent volumes resulting from the critical text study. The article is very informative and should be read by every serious reader of the Book of Mormon.

I find myself disagreeing with one of Skousen's recommended emendations. In Mosiah 19:24, he suggests reading "after they had ended the sermon" instead of "after they had ended the ceremony." He writes, "The word *ceremony* does not make sense here, nor is there any older meaning of the word that might work" (p. 64). I assume that he has not read my chapter on "The Nephite Purification Ceremony," in which I explain that the Nephites mentioned in this passage had just killed King Noah, an act that would have called for purification under the law of Moses.² If Skousen has read that piece, perhaps he disagrees with my assessment, in which case he may give his reasons in one of his forthcoming volumes.

2. See chapter 24 in John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 176–93.

I hope to see Skousen also deal with the expression “midst of dark(w|n)ess” in Alma 5:7, which I long have thought should read “mist of darkness,” as in 1 Nephi 8:23–24 and 1 Nephi 12:4.³ Skousen reads the printer’s manuscript as “mi{d}st of darkness,” evidently suggesting that the *d* was added as an afterthought.⁴ I suspect that this is an error.

The final article is Daniel C. Peterson’s “A Response: ‘What the Manuscripts and the Eyewitnesses Tell Us about the Translation of the Book of Mormon.’” Peterson explains the translation process as described by eyewitnesses, thus helping us envision what went on during the time the Prophet Joseph Smith dictated the English translation of the Nephite record to Oliver Cowdery.

Bradford and Coutts have done an excellent job in pulling together the various papers and associated photographs and artwork under the watchful eye of Royal Skousen. The layout and content of the booklet are excellent, and I highly recommend the volume to readers of the Book of Mormon and others interested in the study and preservation of manuscripts.

3. This expression appears twice in the King James Version of the New Testament—in Acts 13:11 (“a mist and a darkness”) and in 2 Peter 2:17 (“the mist of darkness”).

4. Skousen, *Printer’s Manuscript*, 1:410.

THE BOOK OF MORMON TODAY

Noel B. Reynolds

I am minded to propose a whole-hearted community “thank-you” to Terryl Givens for giving us this most recent book, *By the Hand of Mormon*. The closing chapters were even better than the first, confirming my early suspicion that it would be one of the most informative and stimulating books I had read in some time. In a single stroke, Terryl Givens has produced the first full-length account of the Book of Mormon and its changing roles in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints as well as in American religion, has shown faithful Latter-day Saints how to speak intelligently to the educated public at large about their unique scriptural tradition and the widespread attacks on that tradition, and has broken through the publishing barrier that has prevented other related manuscripts from being brought out by leading academic presses. The magnitude of this achievement will be most evident to the scores of faithful LDS scholars who have been writing on these topics for the last few decades and on whose work Givens builds.

Review of Terryl L. Givens. *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. ix + 320 pp., with notes and index. \$30.00.

The comprehensiveness of the book's treatment of the Book of Mormon is clearly signaled by the topics covered in its nine chapters. While the chapters are carefully designed to work together into a thorough treatment of Book of Mormon issues, they are also written in such a way that they can stand alone and provide profitable reading on specific questions. The first two chapters report in detail the circumstances and personal background of Joseph Smith during the years that he received heavenly visions and translated and published the Book of Mormon, and they also relate the story of the Book of Mormon to the background of the Bible. The third chapter shows how the divine origins of the book led early generations of Latter-day Saints to treat it more as a sign of the restoration of all things through Joseph Smith than as a source of divinely inspired teachings. As the final chapter shows, this latter function did not come into full prominence among Latter-day Saints until the last quarter of the twentieth century, when it emerged as the "touchstone" of LDS culture. Chapters 4 and 5 examine the wide variety of efforts to locate Nephite homelands and to criticize or defend the text's form or content. Chapter 6 carefully reviews and then rejects the thesis advanced both by a few Latter-day Saints and many more non-Latter-day Saint writers that the Book of Mormon could still have some religious value even if Joseph Smith were its author. Chapters 7 and 8 go on to assess the theological or doctrinal implications of the book for biblical Christianity. In what some readers see as his most original contribution, Givens finds in the Book of Mormon a guide to personal or "dialogic revelation" (p. 209), which he rates as one of its key contributions to the restoration.

Givens opens with a thorough recapitulation of the events surrounding the revelation and translation of the golden plates. Suspicious Book of Mormon critics will be reassured by Givens's straightforward inclusion of all the activities of those years, many of which are frequently used to ground criticism, but are sometimes omitted from merely pious versions of this history. While some faithful Latter-day Saints might be concerned with this open and nondefensive approach, they will also be reassured as the picture that gradually

emerges is one in which the people in Joseph Smith's family and neighborhood, who knew him best and saw the artifacts for themselves, were unanimous throughout their lives in affirming the veracity of his extraordinary claims to have received ancient records from an angel, which he subsequently translated by the gift and power of God. As Givens rehearses the conflicting accounts of the Anthon transcript, the appearance and use of the interpreters and seer stone (both of which were later called Urim and Thummim by the early Saints), the nature of the translation process, and the oft-alleged use of the Bible, he is always fully informed, balanced, and matter-of-fact in his presentations. And in the process, he establishes the axiom that because of these origins, all critical discussion of the Book of Mormon must focus on "the realm of the concrete, historical, and empirical" (p. 42).

In the second chapter, Givens introduces the actual story set out in the Book of Mormon, situating Lehi and his family in the larger sweep of Old Testament history. This also presents him with the opportunity to explain why a book based in Old Testament times so clearly focuses on Jesus Christ. With the Book of Mormon, the interventions of Jesus in the time and space of human history are multiplied, challenging the traditional Christian account of "the supreme miracle" (p. 49) as unique and providing basis for the common complaint of critics that the book's claims are blasphemous. Givens shows his readers what most Book of Mormon readers tend to ignore or underrate—the extraordinary complexity of sources used by Mormon and the other contributors to the text. The multiplicity of source materials, themselves written by different people with different perspectives and motivations, embeds a level of complexity into the text that is almost never taken seriously by critics, who simply assume that Joseph Smith or one of his contemporaries was its author. Finally, the account of the publication process shows how the manuscript provided the principal justification for the founding and growth of a restored church of Christ, even though the published version could hardly find buyers.

In chapter 3 Givens develops the insight that the principal role served by the new scripture in its early decades was not so much as

a transmitter of new doctrines,¹ but as a sign or proof to the world that the Lord had opened the long-promised final dispensation complete with a new prophet and a new church to prepare the world for his own second coming. It was this message, more than any new theology, that attracted converts from a frontier population prepared by the teachings of the millenarians.² And the new dispensation had arrived with a new prophet. Unlike recent examples of mystics with their idiosyncratic visions, Joseph was a prophet from the Old Testament mold.³ He was visited by angels and by God himself. He spoke for God in calling all men to repent and engage themselves in the great task of building the kingdom of God. And, of particular importance for Givens's project, Joseph received the English text of the Book of Mormon by direct revelation, mediated only by the Urim and Thummim or the seer stone—but not from his own imagination or through any human project of translation. Its words were divinely given without interpretation or modification by the human “translator.” As Givens emphasizes, “the ‘message’ of the Book of Mormon *was* its manner of origin” (p. 84). And it was precisely the claimed origins that confirmed the early critics' conviction that it could not possibly be what it claimed to be. A contemporary newspaper proclaimed without any sense of irony that even though ““we have never seen a copy of the book of Mormon,”” readers should be assured that it ““is a bungling and stupid production. . . . We have no hesitation in saying the whole system is erroneous”” (p. 86). Or, in the words of mid-twentieth-century sociologist/historian Thomas O'Dea, “the Book of Mormon has not been universally considered by

1. Richard L. Bushman set out similar arguments in *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 142.

2. This point was made earlier in brief remarks by Hugh Nibley in “The Mormon View of the Book of Mormon,” in *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 259–64. This essay originally appeared under the same title in *Concilium: An International Review of Theology* 10 (December 1967): 82–83, and elsewhere.

3. A point also made by Hugh Nibley in his “Prophets and Mystics,” in *The World and the Prophets* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1987), 98–107.

its critics as one of those books that must be read in order to have an opinion of it.”⁴

Without explicitly reminding his readers of this attitude, Givens somehow induces us to remember it time and again as he reviews treatments of the Book of Mormon by prominent scholars who nonetheless are so confident of their own paradigms and assumptions that they fail to take the complexities of the book seriously—complexities that challenge and sometimes refute the assumptions of modern authorship.

The fourth chapter sets forth a highly informative and up-to-date summary history of how the first Latter-day Saint generation seized on new and dramatic evidence of ancient civilization in Mesoamerica as corroboration of the Book of Mormon’s veracity as a history of an ancient American people. Readers will discover that the contemporary flowering of imaginative attempts to match the Nephite narrative to different features of the geography of the Western Hemisphere is only the continuation of this early Latter-day Saint pastime. Further, it will become clear that Joseph Smith and his closest associates were intrigued by this same possibility when the publication of discoveries of stupendous Mesoamerican ruins first made the American public aware of this lost civilization in the jungles of Mexico and Guatemala. Claims that these early leaders had staked out definitive or inspired geographical theories lose their force in the face of clear evidence of the enthusiastic speculation and experimentation with multiple possibilities that occupied their attention. Behind it all, we see the driving force of the recognition that the Book of Mormon was understood by Latter-day Saints to be a narrative composed by real people who lived somewhere. Evidences of their long history must necessarily surface sometime in the future, and may have already, if we only knew for sure what we are seeking or seeing. In the process, Givens explains the ongoing efforts of the Smithsonian Institution’s National Museum of Natural History to disengage itself from rumors that it had once used the Book of Mormon as an explorers’ guide. What is remarkable

4. Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), 26.

about the recent withdrawal of the earlier disavowals is how many of the old certainties of scientific opinion marking differences with Book of Mormon claims are now less certain or even rejected.

In chapter 5 Givens goes on to ask how either the evidence, or lack thereof, for ancient Nephites could prove anything about Mormonism. While some Latter-day Saints continue to trumpet this or that archaeological finding as proof for the truth of the Book of Mormon narrative, the Latter-day Saint scholarly community and the leadership of the church have been much more cautious and careful. While recognizing that faith does not derive from or ultimately rest on philosophical or scientific proofs, there is also a clear acceptance of the fact that the claims of the Book of Mormon apply to the actual or empirical world—it is a story of events that actually happened. Positive connections can corroborate and perhaps even strengthen faith. Negative assessments, likewise, can undermine immature faith, especially that which is not yet solidly grounded in personal spiritual or revelatory experience. Givens reviews the history of scholarly efforts, including those of Hugh Nibley, John Sorenson, John Welch and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS, now Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts at Brigham Young University), and then goes on to summarize the current state of the debate.

Given the endless repetitions and recyclings of intuitive criticisms mounted in the first decade after the book's publication, many people assume that serious problems have thereby been identified and have not been resolved. To emphasize the fallacy of this assumption, Givens quotes two evangelicals who made a study of the anti-Mormon literature and the contemporary response from Latter-day Saint scholars and concluded that, in fact, the sectarian critics are clearly losing the battle because they are unprepared to engage the debate at the high academic level to which LDS scholars have now taken it.⁵

5. See Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, "Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?" *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 19/2 (1998): 179–205.

Givens goes on in chapter 6 to conduct his own review and critique of LDS and non-LDS writers who have advanced a wide variety of alternative theories about the actual origins of the text. The motive in many of these theories has been to find some way to appreciate the “religious value” of the book without having to accept it as a direct translation from an ancient record delivered by an angel to Joseph Smith. The vast majority of Latter-day Saints have not found this literature to be of much interest or value, but those who do track these efforts will be impressed with Givens’s ability to contextualize and analyze virtually all the recognized counterexplanations. Not only does Givens find each of these explanations fundamentally flawed in their respective failures to account for the known facts, but he also finds their basic strategies incoherent. The experiences of Joseph Smith and a large number of his family members and friends during the translation process have to be ignored before theories of alternate authorship can even be considered. And acknowledgment of Joseph Smith’s own limited educational attainments, as attested by his wife and closest associates, seriously weakens attempts to explain the text as his composition deriving from any number of contemporary cultural influences. Notwithstanding the prominent publication of many of these efforts, even in distinguished academic presses, none of them have been able to establish direct connections between the cultural parallels they have researched and Joseph Smith or the process by which the Book of Mormon was produced. This chapter provides a detailed and powerful review of these efforts, and Givens makes it clear that the host of competing explanations of the book’s origins has as yet generated no consensus, nor has any of them met the simplest requirements of dealing with all the known facts in a plausible way. According to Givens:

The naked implausibility of gold plates, seer stones, and warrior-angels finds little by way of scientific corroboration, but attributing to a young farmboy the 90-day dictated and unrevised production of a 500-page narrative that incorporates sophisticated literary structures, remarkable Old World parallels, and some 300 references to chronology and 700 to

geography with virtually perfect self-consistency is problematic as well. (p. 156)

In the next two chapters Givens goes on to a consideration of the doctrinal teachings of the Book of Mormon. After reviewing the ways in which the book has been found to be both supportive of the Bible and different from it, Givens spells out some of its distinctive teachings. The Book of Mormon features a pre-Christian Christianity that identified the messiah (Jesus) with the Old Testament Yahweh. While Givens is correct to note that no Christian sect has taken that view, it is also worth noting that the distinguished Methodist Bible scholar, Margaret Barker, has recently strongly lamented “the Jerusalem Bible’s disastrous decision to use Yahweh in the Old Testament and Lord in the New Testament,” destroying “at a single stroke the unity of Christian Scriptures.”⁶ The Book of Mormon’s repeated insistence on the moral freedom of men refutes the claims of many interpreters that its pessimistic accounts of human nature betray Calvinist origins. Further, he finds “one of its greatest theological contributions” in its doctrine of the atonement, which reclaims “the principle of justice from a kind of Platonic abstraction” and situates “it in the context of human agency” (p. 205).

Chapter 8 is another separable and distinctive contribution, which also focuses on the teachings found in the Book of Mormon. Givens finds a key distinguishing characteristic of LDS teaching and practice in its ultimate reliance on personal revelation. And this he locates in both the direct and the indirect teachings of the Book of Mormon. As dangerous as this might appear to other religious traditions, revelation is consistently portrayed as “the province of everyman” (p. 221). Rather than becoming a source of confusion and chaos, it is this general access to personal revelation from the same source that produces both unshakeable faith and unity of outlook in the followers of Christ and redefines concepts such as “revelation, prayer, inspiration, [and] mys-

6. Margaret Barker, “Text and Context,” an appendix to her book *The Great High Priest* (New York: Continuum International Publishers, forthcoming), n. 63.

tery.” Givens teaches us something very important about the Book of Mormon when he suggests that this “dialogic revelation” “may well be the Book of Mormon’s most significant and revolutionary—as well as controversial—contribution to religious thinking” (p. 221).

The brief concluding chapter first documents the surprising survival and then flowering of the Book of Mormon as the touchstone of LDS culture by the end of the twentieth century. Both the story and the teachings of the book have become embedded in the personal lives of Latter-day Saints everywhere and in the publications and activities of the church. There is hardly any dimension of LDS thought or practice that is not permeated and inspired by language, teachings, or stories derived from the Book of Mormon. Nor is this development without meaning for the significance of LDS teaching and practice in the religious scene of today’s world. Givens asks suggestively, “Does the brazen integration of things human and divine that it embodies represent a collapse of sacred distance tantamount to heresy or a challenge to Hellenic dualisms that heralds a new and welcome orthodoxy?” (p. 245). He points to such recent challenges to the Hellenistic orthodoxy of western Christianity as that expressed by Nicholas Wolterstorff, who wrote,

Haunting Christian theology and Western philosophy throughout the centuries has been the picture of time as bounded, with the created order on this side of the boundary and God on the other. Or sometimes the metaphor has been that of time as extending up to a horizon, with all creaturely reality on this side of the horizon and God on the other. All such metaphors, and the ways of thinking that they represent, must be discarded. Temporality embraces us along with God.⁷

7. Nicholas Wolterstorff, “God Everlasting,” in *God and the Good: Essays in Honor of Henry Stob*, ed. Clifton Orlebeke and Lewis Smedes (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1975), 202.

Then Givens observes, “The Book of Mormon, with its literal re-conceiving of dialogic revelation and its enshrouding tale of divine appearances, angelic visitants, and sacred, material oracles and relics, may be the most dramatic example to date of what Wolterstorff sees as a growing twentieth-century process of ‘the dehellenization of Christian theology’” (p. 245).⁸

Oxford University Press and Terryl Givens have finally given fair-minded readers their first comprehensive treatment of the Book of Mormon. This is a startling claim for what most would recognize as, next to the Bible, the single most significant religious book published in America. But the Book of Mormon is so challenging both to traditional Christian piety and to modern culture that it has proven to be controversial in almost all settings. Givens presents the wide range of studies and interpretations of the Book of Mormon both critically and fairly and concludes that the status and importance of the book are rising for the Saints as well as for some knowledgeable non-Latter-day Saints. If he is correct about this, there is a bright future indeed for serious research efforts to understand the book and its teachings. I hope that those inclined to brush the Book of Mormon aside for any reason whatsoever will examine carefully *By the Hand of Mormon*.

8. Referring to Wolterstorff, “God Everlasting,” 183.

A RARE GEM

John L. Sorenson

In the 170 years since the Book of Mormon was first published, five or six hundred books have been written that seriously discuss it. Perhaps half of those have tried to impeach the scripture. Many others are either essentially devotional in intent or are by authors not prepared to offer ideas or documentation of consequence. Only a few score may be said to be “scholarly,” and virtually all those appeared within the last quarter century. Terryl Givens’s *By the Hand of Mormon* is the only book that seeks to present “an overview of what this ‘golden bible’ has meant, and might conceivably yet come to mean, to its various readerships” (author’s note). Givens has produced the first serious survey of the place of the Book of Mormon in the history of American thought and culture.¹

One’s pessimistic expectation for a work of such ambitious scope is that it will be constrained in its view of the history of culture, stronger

1. The only previous treatment that even bows in that direction is Robert B. Downs’s short piece “Latter-day Saint: Joseph Smith’s *The Book of Mormon*,” in *Books That Changed America* (New York: Macmillan, 1970), 26–35.

Review of Terryl L. Givens. *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. ix + 320 pp., with notes and index. \$30.00.

on the author's opinions than on historical coverage, and stylistically arid. It is a tribute to the author's erudition, logical and literary skill, and good judgment that such fears prove unjustified in this case.

Givens provides a succinct summary of the historical and doctrinal content of the Book of Mormon, but he also makes a number of acute observations that those who have thought themselves familiar with the Nephite scripture will probably not have noticed for themselves. One is that the record was perceived by the early Saints, and still is today, primarily as a sign—that is, its significance lies in the fact of its miraculous origin more than in its content. The very concreteness of the golden plates and of the published translation shifted much of Joseph Smith's burden from having to prove himself a prophet to playing the role of fulfiller of ancient prophecy.

Givens sketches nineteenth- and twentieth-century efforts at identifying and communicating "external evidences" for the authenticity of Mormon's account. He then observes that it remains to be seen whether the kind of historical substantiation (not to say "proof") of the sort which scholars in the FARMS tradition have sometimes sought may lead to unanticipated effects on the understanding the Latter-day Saints have of the Book of Mormon.

The author discusses a wide range of theories about the book's origins that have been proposed by many critics since 1830: He deals with (1) questioners such as B. H. Roberts; (2) critics such as Alexander Campbell, Fawn Brodie, and Dan Vogel; and (3) theories of possible sources such as Solomon Spaulding's work, Ethan Smith's *View of the Hebrews*, New England folk "magic," epilepsy, Joseph Smith as a genius/fraud, "automatic writing," the orthodox Latter-day Saint view, and Blake Ostler's notion that modern-day influences might have entered the ancient account because of the translation process. In every case Givens deftly and fairly summarizes the strengths and weaknesses of the position while also sketching responses orthodox LDS scholars and teachers have given to the challenges. The development of faithful-but-critical scholarship (which FARMS exemplifies) that has arisen especially in the last quarter century is also accurately pictured. This long view gives readers a valuable historical perspective

on the 170-year culture war over the source and significance of the Book of Mormon. Yet throughout Givens places these clashes in a context of general American, and even Western, intellectual and literary history.

Givens writes in language that is clear and attractive. To be sure, the presentation is more demanding of the reader than the language of a seminary manual, for example, but only occasionally does the author's expository style leave the serious reader struggling to penetrate the complexities at issue and wishing for simpler phrasing.

Surely one of the most impressive characteristics of this book is that it was published by Oxford University Press. Most mainstream publishers would shun the risk of issuing such bellwether writing, but Oxford's success with Givens's first book, *The Viper on the Hearth*,² apparently gave them enough confidence in his abilities and in the potential market to go ahead. From the point of view of the future of scholarship on the Mormons and the Book of Mormon, it is of great significance to have this major scholarly press publish this book. The important point is not that these auspices somehow polish the "image" of our people, but that we have arrived at a point where studies of high quality on this and other Mormon topics have a chance to be evaluated fairly and published if their quality is high enough.

In my opinion, the combination of Givens's careful scholarship, felicitous writing, and wide scope combine to make *By the Hand of Mormon* one of a handful of must-read, must-own volumes for serious students of the Book of Mormon.

2. Terry L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997).

INTERPRETING BOOK OF MORMON GEOGRAPHY

Randall P. Spackman

Mormon's Map is John L. Sorenson's most recent compilation and discussion of Book of Mormon passages relating to geography. The book is composed of 128 pages of understandable text (including seventeen maps illustrating geographical features mentioned in the text). Fifty-four endnotes (pp. 129–34), a scripture index (pp. 135–42), a subject index (pp. 143–54), and various other resources make this book a compact research tool. The inside front cover contains “Mormon's Map,” a blue-and-green graphic resembling the maps of biblical lands found at the end of the King James Version of the Holy Bible published by the church in 1979. A legend listing geographical details (that are indicated on the map only by numbers) accompanies this map. Another multicolored map entitled “Major Physical Features” is placed on the inside back cover, permitting the reader to refer quickly to general topographic features.

Mormon's Map revisits many of the verses in the Book of Mormon that were mined for geographical meaning in the author's earlier and larger volumes: *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (1985) and *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*

Review of John L. Sorenson. *Mormon's Map*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000. x + 154 pp., with notes, scripture and subject indexes. \$9.95.

(1992).¹ Indeed, the concluding paragraph in *Mormon's Map* asserts that “the features found on ‘Mormon’s Map’ as presented in this book are more carefully defined, more logically cross-checked, and more numerous than the criteria in the 1992 work” (p. 128). My first impression of *Mormon's Map*—the sort of impression one would get in a bookstore after browsing through the book for a few minutes—was that it provided an attractively packaged, readable, and relatively thorough guide for anyone interested in a reasoned interpretation of Book of Mormon geography.

What Is Mormon’s Map?

Sorenson indicates that what he has called “Mormon’s Map” would, in its ideal form, be a “two-dimensional rendering of the body of information about geography that Mormon possessed in his mind” (p. 125). However, the version of Mormon’s map set forth in Sorenson’s book can only be “a reasonable approximation” (p. 126) of “the Nephites’ *conception* of their geography” based on “all the information [Sorenson has] been able to elicit from Mormon’s words and those of other Book of Mormon writers” (pp. 17, 126, emphasis in original).

Sorenson acknowledges that Mormon’s map is “simplified” and “partial” because “even Mormon could not have recalled at the time he was writing all the knowledge he had acquired about the lands he personally traversed” (p. 125). In addition, “Mormon drew on what he knew of geography and shed light on those matters only when it seemed required in order to formulate his account. . . . He wanted to teach moral lessons to future readers, not instruct them about sheer facts of history and geography. Geography was significant for his task at some points, but not central to it” (p. 125). Finally, the map is “incomplete” because it “can be improved, and will be if we discover new points in the text of the Book of Mormon that require change in the map” (p. 126).

1. John L. Sorenson, *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985); and John L. Sorenson, *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book*, rev. ed. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).

Does Book of Mormon Geography Matter?

Mormon's Map begins with a crucial question: Does geography in the Book of Mormon matter? Sorenson supports his affirmative response by discussing five concepts: (1) Joseph Smith's characterization of the Book of Mormon as "the keystone of our religion"; (2) Brigham Young's questioning challenge to engage all our faculties as readers of scripture (p. 1); (3) Sorenson's belief that the promise of the Book of Mormon (interestingly, he cites 2 Nephi 11:8 rather than the more often utilized Moroni 10:3–5) can be more powerfully fulfilled if the reader's understanding and sense of realism are enhanced by a clearly delineated geographical setting (pp. 2–3); (4) the importance of geography ("precious lands") for the working out of the Lord's purposes (1 Nephi 17:23–26, 32–38) (pp. 3–4); and (5) the "limited and unsystematized" state of our knowledge concerning Book of Mormon geography. Sorenson notes that "a superb set of maps" is included in our edition of the Holy Bible and additional maps began to be included in the Doctrine and Covenants with the 1981 edition of those scriptures. "But our copies of the Book of Mormon still lack even the most basic map to clarify the complicated goings and comings reported in our keystone scripture" (p. 4).

I would add a proposition to the concepts discussed by Sorenson. Book of Mormon geography is vital because it helps to reveal accurate information and to establish rational inferences related to the meaning and truthfulness² of the Book of Mormon as an ancient text. As to geography, the Book of Mormon is Joseph Smith's translation of an ancient document that was originally written by record keepers who perceived events happening in real locations. Book of

2. "In the scriptures and in general usage of the Church, the term 'true' usually means that the events really, literally and actually happened. . . . For the record, the definitions listed in the *Oxford English Dictionary* for the adjective 'true' used of things (such as books) or events in the time of Joseph Smith are 2. 'honest, honourable, upright, virtuous, trustworthy (*arch.*); free from deceit, sincere, truthful;' 3. 'consistent with fact; agreeing with the reality; representing the thing as it is.' 4f. 'conformable to reality.'" John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *FARMS Review of Books* 6/1 (1994): 55 n. 12.

Mormon geography provides the internal clues from which theories can be constructed as to where such locations might be found. External sources (historical, archaeological, geological, geographical, ethnological, and so forth) may then be examined for corroboration or correction of the theories. For example, in the Near Eastern setting in which Lehi originated, we now have several proposed locations in the same general vicinity for the so-called “valley of Lemuel” (1 Nephi 2:10), and one of the locations appears to contain a river running “continually” (1 Nephi 2:9) from a spring.³ In another example, Nephi refers to the followers of Lehi passing through “the place which was called Nahom” (1 Nephi 16:34) and then turning “nearly eastward” and enduring “much affliction in the wilderness” before finally reaching “the land which [they] called Bountiful” on the seacoast (1 Nephi 17:1–6). Now it has been found that in a setting where Book of Mormon geography would place the location of Nahom, a place called “Nehhm” existed (according to an eighteenth-century map). References in related writings from several centuries earlier mention a pagan god (“Nuhum”), a tribal ancestor (“Nuham”), and a region and tribe (“Nihm”). Most recently, archaeological investigations in the area have unearthed an inscribed stone altar from the seventh or sixth century B.C. (about the time of Lehi) referring to the tribe of “Nihm.”⁴ Such tangible support indicates that the events described in the Book of Mormon were not the imagined novelties of Joseph Smith but reasonably could have happened just where and when the book says they occurred.

Such evidence (whether geological, topographical, cultural, geographical, or environmental) is not a prerequisite for the development of a basic understanding and spiritual acceptance of and loyal commitment to the religious message of the Book of Mormon. The work-

3. George D. Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia for the ‘Valley of Lemuel,’” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 54–63.

4. S. Kent Brown, “‘The Place That Was Called Nahom’: New Light from Ancient Yemen,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 66–68.

ings of the Holy Spirit are not dependent on educational attainments, scholarly acceptance, or scientific advances. Perhaps these facts are related to Sorenson's reasons for not expressly mentioning this line of argument. His book seems primarily addressed to Latter-day Saints who, in the overwhelming majority, are neither educationally ready nor sufficiently funded to develop carefully drawn theories, to pursue and examine potential data, to recognize physical substantiation, and, where necessary, to suggest modifications to prevailing interpretations of Book of Mormon geography. For such readers, *Mormon's Map* fills the purpose of providing a reasonably careful guide to current views about the geography of the Book of Mormon.

Nonetheless, Book of Mormon geography is vital to the establishment and management of an efficient and productive process for developing theories about, and seeking and finding material evidence related to, the Book of Mormon. The Lord has declared that the Book of Mormon "contains the truth and the word of God" (D&C 19:26), and he has commanded us to "grow . . . in the knowledge of the truth" (D&C 50:40). Surely that divinely intended growth may involve an organized process for extending our knowledge about the people and geography described in the Book of Mormon.

Sorenson does address the issue of Latter-day Saint church leaders having already settled questions about Nephite geography. He makes it clear that early suppositions of church members about a hemispheric geography ignored the evidence to be found in the text of the Book of Mormon. Sorenson also quotes church leaders and publications to show that no authoritative map or geography has ever been revealed or adopted, remarking that "what logically would seem to be one of the first steps in a systematic investigation—to construct a map of the American 'land of promise' based solely on statements in [the Book of Mormon] (at least 550 passages are relevant)—seems not to have occurred to anyone during the church's first century" (p. 4). The investigative efforts in the second century have resulted in "tremendous confusion and a plethora of notions that holds no promise of producing a consensus" (p. 5), primarily because most writers fail to take the first step of detailed textual examination.

Mormon's Map is Sorenson's most recent effort to provide such a first-step analysis for a general Latter-day Saint audience.⁵

A Comprehensive Process

In the book's second chapter, Sorenson describes the process for developing "Mormon's Map." The starting point, certainly, is the text itself. "Whatever the Book of Mormon says about its own geography . . . takes precedence over anything commentators have said of it" (p. 9). Sorenson advises that we must "intensively examine the text Mormon left us (of course, we have access to it only as it has been transmitted to us in English through Joseph Smith)" (p. 12). This is a premise he also sets forth in *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events*:

If we are serious about answering the question [Where were the lands in which Book of Mormon events took place?] . . . what should we do . . . ? Well, the question itself has two sides to it. Our goal has to be to construct an equation involving the two sides:

Nephite locations A, B, C, etc. = New World locations X, Y, Z, etc.

We cannot work on the whole equation without first attaining thorough definition of the variables on either side of the equal sign. Equipping ourselves with that thorough knowledge demands different capabilities on the one side and on the other. For the external world, we cannot substitute knowledge of

5. Sorenson's *Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* interweaves a first-step analysis with his knowledge and beliefs derived from years of study and writing on the topic of Nephite geography. His *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* is another first step, and the map with which it concludes is virtually the same as "Mormon's Map." These are valuable research tools. However, the 1985 book moves rapidly from the text of the Book of Mormon to the geography and cultures of Mesoamerica and back again. The 1992 work does not connect the scriptural passages, Sorenson's inferences about Nephite geography from such passages, and the proposed map as seamlessly or as comprehensively as does *Mormon's Map*.

scripture for knowledge of climate, topography, hydrography, etc. Unavoidably, we must have a profound grasp of the elements of the physical and cultural scene in its own terms—without any reference to the scripture. Most people offering [geographic] models show that they have limited knowledge of that world. On the other side, we must know all there is to know about the statements in the Book of Mormon on the matters at hand—without any reference to external geography, archaeology, or history.

Everything done so far in studying the geography of Book of Mormon events [presumably including Sorenson's earlier writings] has been inadequate by reason of incompleteness, if not of real errors.⁶

John E. Clark addresses the same issue in his article “A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies,” published in 1989.⁷ He examines the Book of Mormon passages he thought were important in developing an understanding of an “elemental” geography described in the book. Clark seems to be the first to attempt to treat the geography of the Book of Mormon solely from an internal standpoint and to base his thoughts on “all the geographical passages in the Book of Mormon.”⁸ Because of the importance of Clark's 1989 article and Sorenson's 1992 book with respect to the topic treated in *Mormon's Map*, this review will refer to these earlier studies. For example, Clark addresses the issue of textual examination as follows:

It has been my experience that most members of the Church, when confronted with a Book of Mormon geography, worry about the wrong things. Almost invariably the first question that arises is whether the geography fits the archaeology of the proposed area. This should be our second question,

6. Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 209.

7. John E. Clark, “A Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies,” *FARMS Review of Books* 1 (1989): 20–70.

8. *Ibid.*, 23, 22.

the first being whether the geography fits the facts of the Book of Mormon—a question we all can answer without being versed in American archaeology. Only after a given geography reconciles all of the significant geographic details given in the Book of Mormon does the question of archaeological and historical detail merit attention. The Book of Mormon must be the final and most important arbiter in deciding the correctness of a given geography; otherwise we will be forever hostage to the shifting sands of expert opinion.⁹

With the fervent injunction (and leadership) of Clark and Sorenson requiring us to focus our attention on the text of the Book of Mormon as a first step in creating a realistic geography, the next crucial issue seems to be finding all the passages of text on which our focus is to rest. Both authors begin with Alma 22 and quickly build interpretative links to other passages of text. According to *Mormon's Map*,

the nearest thing to a systematic explanation of Mormon's geographical picture is given in Alma 22:27–34. In the course of relating an incident involving Nephite missionaries and the great king over the Lamanites, Mormon inserted a 570-word aside that summarized major features of the land southward. He must have considered that treatment full and clear enough for his purposes, because he never returned to the topic. Overall, over 550 verses in the Book of Mormon contain information of geographical significance: the account is steeped with information about the where of Nephite events. (p. 9)

Having read Sorenson's analysis, my assumption was that I could readily find the more than 550 verses mentioned by Sorenson if I looked in the scripture index to *Mormon's Map*. In fact, I found 637 verses.¹⁰ Clark used 318 verses to develop his "elemental" geography

9. Ibid., 21.

10. A few errors in the verses referenced in *Mormon's Map*, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, and Clark's "Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies" had to be corrected.

of the Book of Mormon. In light of this discrepancy in number of verses, I began to wonder how many verses in the Book of Mormon have been thought to hold meaning for someone intently seeking an understanding of the book's geography. More importantly, I wondered which verses they were.

Before reading *Mormon's Map*, I had been aware of the proposed internal or textual examination of Book of Mormon geography primarily through Sorenson's *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*; I therefore turned to part 4 of his 1992 study and counted the textual references: 725 verses. At this point, I questioned to what extent the verses identified by Sorenson matched those of Clark. I wondered whether Sorenson's 1992 study and *Mormon's Map* referred to essentially the same textual passages.

While Sorenson and Clark both started with Alma 22, they went on to examine quite different sets of verses. Of Clark's 318 verses, 85 did not show up in Sorenson's *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* and 140 verses were not cited in *Mormon's Map*. Of the 725 verses cited in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 233 were listed in Clark's paper and 492 were "new" verses. Looking at *Mormon's Map*, I found that only 178 cited verses were listed in Clark's paper and only 201 verses came from the "new" verses listed in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*. That is, of the 637 verses cited in *Mormon's Map*, neither Clark nor Sorenson had identified 258 verses earlier as being relevant to Book of Mormon geography. Furthermore, of the 492

In *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 249, Sorenson lists Alma 23:34, but this verse does not exist. In *Mormon's Map*, 96, 137, he refers to Alma 23:20 and 25, and these verses do not exist. These references probably should be to Mosiah 23:20, 25, and 34. Similarly, Clark refers to Alma 58:61 (p. 32) and Alma 62:8–9 (p. 41), but these probably should be Alma 51:26 and 62:18–19. In addition, both Clark and Sorenson occasionally refer to entire chapters in the Book of Mormon as being generally relevant. Often, specific verses in the chapter are also cited. Such general chapter references have value to a dedicated reader, but I did not add all such verses into the count. I thought that the occasional reference to an entire chapter materially skewed the count. Hence, only the verses cited by each author as having specific interpretative value are included. Finally, *Mormon's Map* might be interpreted as referring to specific verses when it cites 1 Nephi 18:23–Omni 1:13 (p. 108) and Mormon 2:16–6:6 (p. 50), but these citations are treated like chapter references and are not counted.

“new” verses listed in *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, fully 291 did not receive any mention in *Mormon’s Map*.

Table 1 below shows the distribution of verses with potential geographical significance cited in Clark’s article and in Sorenson’s *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* and *Mormon’s Map*. As the table depicts, Clark’s study of Book of Mormon passages relevant to geography relies almost entirely on verses in the books of Alma and Mosiah (86 percent of the cited verses). These books are also vital to Sorenson’s *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* (63 percent of the cited verses) and *Mormon’s Map* (53 percent of the cited verses). Nonetheless, Sorenson’s work indicates a capacity to expand the scope of inquiry outside the books of Alma and Mosiah and to find geographical inferences in a wide variety of scriptural contexts. This does not mean that Clark’s work is defective; he apparently did not intend to go beyond an “elemental” geography. Sorenson, on the other hand, has dedicated a tremendous amount of time to the study of an internal Nephite map of Book of Mormon events.

Table 1
Numbers of Specifically Cited Verses with
Potential Geographical Relevance

| | <u>Clark 1989</u> | <u>Sorenson 1992</u> | <u>Sorenson 2000</u> |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| 1 Nephi | 0 | 3 | 24 |
| 2 Nephi | 4 | 14 | 8 |
| Jacob | 0 | 10 | 0 |
| Enos | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Jarom | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Omni | 2 | 8 | 12 |
| Words of Mormon | 0 | 1 | 0 |
| Mosiah | 40 | 77 | 77 |
| Alma | 234 | 382 | 258 |
| Helaman | 14 | 39 | 63 |

| | | | |
|---------|-------|-------|-------|
| 3 Nephi | 8 | 49 | 44 |
| 4 Nephi | 0 | 13 | 9 |
| Mormon | 10 | 59 | 71 |
| Ether | 6 | 61 | 56 |
| Moroni | 0 | 5 | 10 |
| <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> | <hr/> |
| Totals | 318 | 725 | 637 |

After I eliminated duplications and identified all geographically relevant verses used by Clark and Sorenson combined, I compiled a table of 1,068 verses that have been thought to carry potential meaning for constructing a Nephite conceptual geography.¹¹ It seems to me that if we are going to become conscious of and accept the idea that we are searching for as good an internal map as we can find, then we really need to be reading these 1,068 verses in the Book of Mormon. They would *now* seem to be the best place to *start*.

Are the 637 verses cited in *Mormon's Map* (60 percent of the total) sufficient to develop an adequate internal map? Sorenson clearly believes that his book examines “mainly the most decisive and clearest statements” (p. 15). I do not know who could answer the question in any better manner today. A new level of Book of Mormon interpretative scholarship will have to be reached before our comprehension of the book's internal geography will be more accurate. Today, we can primarily refer just to the somewhat different views of Clark and Sorenson.

A Comprehending Process

In addition to including a *comprehensive* reading of textual passages, the process of reading the Book of Mormon for geographical meaning must provide us with *comprehension* of the meanings de-

11. This table, “Verses in the Book of Mormon with Potential Geographical Relevance,” is available on request from FARMS, P.O. Box 7113, University Station, Provo, UT 84602.

noted and connoted by the words in the text. Necessarily, this raises the issue of how to interpret the text. Sorenson identifies several important principles that guide his interpretation of the Book of Mormon text. Clark also sets forth his assumptions on how to interpret the text. At their most basic level, these principles or assumptions fall into four common categories.

The Assumption of Simplicity

Rational simplicity and economy are to be assumed. *Mormon's Map* states: "We should avoid needlessly complicated synthesis. If two explanations occur to us for solving a geographical problem, the simpler solution—the one with the fewest arbitrary assumptions—is probably better" (p. 14). Clark words the assumption of simplicity as follows: "The best internal reconstruction is one which reconciles all of the data in the Book of Mormon with a minimum number of additional assumptions."¹² These assumptions represent *Ockham's razor*, the "principle attributed to the fourteenth-century English philosopher William of Ockham . . . that one should choose the simplest explanation, the one requiring the fewest assumptions and principles."¹³ It is the rational principle of parsimony that ought to guide our interpretations of the Book of Mormon text *unless*, of course, the text itself unambiguously requires a more complex interpretation.

The Assumption of Consistency

In the *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, Sorenson presents the assumption of consistency this way: "Minor slips of the 'pen' aside, all the information on geography will prove to be consistent."¹⁴ In *Mormon's Map*, he sets forth his assumption in the form of a conclusion about consistency:

12. Clark, "Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," 22.

13. *The New York Public Library Desk Reference*, 2nd ed. (New York: Prentice Hall General Reference, 1993), 277.

14. Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 215.

My personal experience with the text of the Book of Mormon is that all the geographical information does prove to be consistent, so I conclude that Mormon possessed an orderly “mental map” of the scene on which his people’s history was played out.

... Mormon leaves no evidence of confusion about geography; he easily persuades me that he could have told us more had he chosen to do so. Even when particular lands or cities are mentioned at widely separated places in the text, the statements fit comfortably together into a plausible whole. He never hints that he did not understand the geography behind the records of his ancestors that he was abridging; rather, his writing exudes an air of confidence. (pp. 10–11)

Clark also expresses this assumption in his study of Book of Mormon geography: “Assume that all passages are internally consistent and can be reconciled.” Clark adds two closely related propositions: “Assume no scribal errors unless internal evidence indicates otherwise. . . . Assume no duplication of place names unless the text is unambiguous on the matter.”¹⁵ I would add the word *unmistakably* to Clark’s “scribal error” assumption. Internal evidence must *unmistakably* indicate an error. That which a reader might initially think is a “slip of the pen” (because of an insufficiently examined interpretation) usually turns out to be reconcilable when more evidence from the text of the Book of Mormon is carefully considered.

The Assumption of Uniformity

Both Clark and Sorenson rely on the assumption that at the time of the Book of Mormon, the natural world existed, operated, and was described in ways similar to the natural world we study and understand today. Clark makes this a general assumption and mentions, as examples, “that the locality where the Book of Mormon events took

15. Clark, “Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies,” 22.

place was not unrecognizably altered at the time of the crucifixion, that geographic details in the small plates and in the book of Ether are therefore compatible with those in Mormon's and Moroni's abridgment, and that the principles of natural science that apply to today's environments are also pertinent to Nephite lands."¹⁶ In *Mormon's Map*, Sorenson expresses the sense of a general uniformitarian assumption with two rather simple propositions: "The expressions 'up,' 'down,' and 'over,' when used in a geographical context, refer to elevation. . . . Nature worked the same anciently as it does today." Sorenson elaborates with examples: "We can be sure that the headwaters of rivers were at a higher elevation than their mouths, and a river implies the presence of a corresponding drainage basin" (p. 13).

Sorenson also confronts the idea that "we cannot hope to attain clarity because of the great destruction that took place at the time of the Savior's crucifixion." Those who suggest such a notion may feel that the destruction "so changed everything that what could be seen of the landscape in former times would not be recognizable afterward. Mormon lets us know that this concern is unfounded" (p. 11). Sorenson then leads us through the textual evidence to conclude that "most of the basic land forms and ecological conditions had [not] been rendered unrecognizable" (p. 12). Hence, both textual evidence and logic require an assumption of uniformity in the way nature operates today and operated in Book of Mormon times.

If one were to assume otherwise, one's geographical theory would have to be categorized as being in the realm of science fiction. A fictional geography may be appropriate for a literary work about imaginary characters, but such a geography would not be appropriate for the Book of Mormon. The events set forth in the Book of Mormon were perceived to have happened by actual Nephite historians and their sources. Such events occurred in real geographical settings subject to the normal laws and processes of nature.

16. Ibid.

The Assumption of an Uncertain Cultural Comprehension

Clark suggests, without elaboration, that one should “assume a literal meaning” for Book of Mormon terminology.¹⁷ Sorenson seems to recommend otherwise. “Ideas in the record will not necessarily be familiar or clear to us. . . . Book of Mormon terminology will not necessarily be clear to us, even in translation, because language and cultural assumptions change. . . . We must seek to overcome any problems this causes us by striving to think, feel, and see as if we were Mormon, rather than supposing that we can read the text ‘literally’ (which actually turns out to mean ‘according to unspoken assumptions of our current culture’)” (pp. 13–14). Neither author is consistent in following his own advice, as will be discussed below.

Naturally, if one strives to think, feel, and see like Mormon, one might simply be thinking, feeling, and seeing in accordance with one’s own cultural preconceptions (including those one has about Mormon). To actually accomplish what Sorenson suggests, we must know something about how Mormon thought, felt, and viewed the world; to do that, we should know at least the basics about how others in his part of the world perceived themselves and their world. Thus, we must know *where* Mormon lived in order to discover from all this internal Book of Mormon research *where* Mormon lived!

The process is circular and moves forward only with the acceptance and incorporation of more completely developed and understood information. As a result of this circularity, Sorenson’s assumption of uncertainty in cultural terminology and ideas necessarily leads to a delicate exercise in determining when to rest (one cannot stop entirely) in this cyclical process of interpreting the text, associating the text with a theoretical world, examining the remains of the real world related to such a theoretical world, and then reinterpreting the text, modifying the theory, conducting further research, reinterpreting the text, etc. These are not tasks that most readers want to or can undertake. Hence, Sorenson’s assumption imposes a requirement

17. Ibid.

of special knowledge or expertise and turns the process of reading the Book of Mormon for geographical purposes into a process that must fundamentally be a scholarly pursuit.

While I think Sorenson's assumption is a correct one, as a general reader of Book of Mormon geography I also think the assumption is not without interpretative risk (Clark's "shifting sands of expert opinion" referred to above). We cannot continue to rely indefinitely on individual scholars working independently to bring about an improved understanding of Book of Mormon cultural ideas and terminology (whether having to do with geography or otherwise). The *need* for collaborative work continues to grow. The institutions necessary to produce such work ought to be identified, promoted, supported, and managed. But here I am really taking off on a tangent—an important tangent, nonetheless, that is directly related to Sorenson's work in *Mormon's Map*.

Sorenson is surely correct that we have to take Mormon's terminology and ideas into account. We must also bear in mind the transmission of the text from Mormon's language into the English of Joseph Smith and from there into the English of our contemporary culture. As *Mormon's Map* briefly observes, "English has changed between 1829 and 2000" (pp. 13–14). Does this mean we must strive to think, feel, and see like Joseph Smith, too? The answer is yes. Where did Joseph Smith live? How did people think, feel, and see in his culture? How did they express themselves? What did they know of Mormon's world? We must also question how people today think, feel, see, and communicate. Indeed, what do we know today about Mormon's world? Thus, we must be aware of three cultural screens—Mormon's (or the Nephites'), Joseph Smith's, and our own—standing between us and the world of the Book of Mormon. We must assume an uncertain comprehension at our own level, at Joseph Smith's level, and, perhaps to a much lesser extent, even at Mormon's level. All three cultural screens must be taken into account in any serious interpretative process.

My own research provides a clear example of the kinds of issues that need to be examined when attempting to interpret passages in

the Book of Mormon and place their meaning into current English language and concepts. *Mormon's Map* mentions the particular issue of the differences between contemporary and ancient notions about “many days” of travel. “Similarly, we might ask, would ‘year’ have meant the same to [Mormon] as it does to us? Lasting how long? Beginning and ending when? Composed of what seasonal variations in climate?” (p. 78).

When I began studying Book of Mormon chronology,¹⁸ I started with a naive awareness that part of Nephite record keeping included the measurement of *years*. That’s an English word familiar to me and the same word that Joseph Smith used to represent calendrical periods expressed by Nephi in the sixth century B.C. (e.g., 2 Nephi 5:28—“thirty years”), by Mormon in the fourth century A.D. (e.g., Mormon 6:5—“three hundred and eighty and four years”), and by Moroni in the fourth or fifth century A.D., when he abridged records based on historical reports from roughly one to two thousand years earlier (e.g., Ether 9:24—“an hundred and forty and two years”).

While Joseph Smith and the vast majority of his contemporaries surely understood the common notion of a solar or seasonal year as the repeating period indicated by the term *year*, they were not acquainted to any significant degree with ancient timekeeping systems. The idea that ancient cultures may have used a variety of different calendars or *years* (at separate times or at the same time) probably did not cross the minds of more than a few of Joseph Smith’s contemporaries in North

18. See, for example, Randall P. Spackman, “Introduction to Book of Mormon Chronology: The Principal Prophecies, Calendars, and Dates” (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1993); and Randall P. Spackman, “The Jewish/Nephite Lunar Calendar,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 48–59. These studies primarily introduce the twelve-moon calendar that was used for official and religious Nephite record keeping before the birth of Christ and secondarily indicate the use of a 365-day calendar for Nephite record keeping after the birth of Christ. My more recent research indicates the use of both 365-day and 260-day calendars by Jaredites, Lamanites, and Nephites (in addition to the Jewish/Nephite lunar calendar). Before examining the use of 365-day and 260-day calendars, one must first adjust the recorded history for the Nephites’ use of the twelve-moon calendar in their records during the era before the birth of Christ; that is, twelve-moon years must be turned into days, and days must then be recombined to measure 365-day years or 260-day years.

America. And if such an idea did cross their minds, what word other than *years* would they have chosen to describe simply and accurately the meaning of recurring calendrical periods that were significantly longer than a few months?

Hence, an important question for interpreting Book of Mormon chronology is whether one can reasonably conclude that Joseph Smith's use of the word he knew and understood (*years*) necessarily requires the conclusion that we must understand that word in the Book of Mormon in exactly the same way that Joseph Smith and his contemporaries did or the conclusion that the exact same calendar was used by Nephi, Mormon, and the Jaredites described by Moroni in the book of Ether. My research, which has undergone several interpretative cycles, indicates that in each of the three citations above, the word *years* describes a period of time measured with a distinctly different calendar and that for most of Nephite history all three calendars were in use by the timekeepers.

Is a "literal" interpretation of the word *years*, such as Clark proposes, even possible? I would say yes—in a sense it is. Whatever period of time is indicated, it must literally be some form of a *year*. But several dissimilar types of *years* eventually must be understood. A "literal" use of Joseph Smith's calendar, which is our calendar (the Dionysian/Gregorian calendar introduced by Pope Gregory XIII in A.D. 1582), must necessarily lead to a distorted Book of Mormon chronology because it was not the calendar used by the ancient record keepers. Nephi, Mormon, and the Jaredites used distinctive calendars for separate purposes. Our interpretative experience can add rich levels of meaning to our literal reading of the word *years*.

Can I also, as Sorenson proposes, think, feel, and see as Mormon did? Again, I would say yes—in a way I can. But sitting in my easy chair and urging myself into some sort of imaginary late-Nephite reverie is certainly not the way. Once the terminology and ideas expressed in the Book of Mormon with respect to a specific topic have been fully examined from a textual standpoint, then careful study of external sources (including other scriptures) and thoughtful synthesis must be undertaken. That is one of the reasons why *Mormon's Map* is

such a valuable book—a scholar of Sorenson's stature has taken the time and effort to clarify his thinking regarding the textual evidence he has examined and interpreted concerning the Book of Mormon land of promise.

Interpreting Book of Mormon Directions

The assumptions of Clark and Sorenson appear to differ most in their interpretative effect in relation to issues about directions in the Book of Mormon. These issues require the adoption of interpretations that are more complex and uncertain because the Book of Mormon seems, at least on the level of construal undertaken so far, to provide relatively little information about the Nephite directional system. As a result, Clark and Sorenson bring significant external assumptions to their interpretative tasks. These assumptions are valuable for the light they shine on the interpretation process.

Sorenson's treatment of the Nephite directional system in *Mormon's Map* is for me the least satisfying discussion in the entire book. It is not a step forward.¹⁹ To explain my disappointment and to help elucidate the interpretative process yet to be commenced with respect to directions in the Book of Mormon, I will contrast Sorenson's treatment of Nephite directions with the very limited interpretation undertaken by Clark.

In *Mormon's Map*, Sorenson devotes a short section to Nephite directions. He begins, not with an examination of the text relating to directions, but with textual passages that indicate how limited our understanding of Nephite ideas and terminology might be. "When we examine the text of the Book of Mormon carefully, we can detect numerous places where cultural assumptions that were second nature to the Nephites are quite different than those we hold. We Latter-day Saints may have become so used to 'liken[ing] all scriptures unto us' (1 Nephi 19:23) that we assume we understand ideas in them that actually are foreign to our experience" (p. 78). Then, instead of dealing

19. Compare Sorenson, *Geography of Book of Mormon Events*, 399–415.

with such foreign textual matters associated with directions, Sorenson talks about a Book of Mormon execution ceremony, the king's priests versus the church's priests, a royal pleading process, dragons, heaven and hell, and the space above the earth.

None of these topics has anything to do directly with the geography of the Book of Mormon world; so, one might logically ask how they are related to the Nephite directional system. Sorenson continues, "There are many points of similarity, of course, between [the Nephites'] concepts and ours. Much of the thought and experience conveyed in the ancient records relates sufficiently to the symbols and meanings familiar in our culture that we can learn much from studying them. But differences need to be recognized, not ignored. Direction is one such concept" (p. 79).

After such a lengthy introduction, I was ready for the evidence. But instead of focusing on the text of the Book of Mormon related to directions, Sorenson cites external sources to show that directional systems have varied from culture to culture. The Inuit of the north, the Sumerians and Babylonians of Mesopotamia, and the Maya of Mesoamerica are mentioned as having directional systems different from our own. "To those who share a particular culture, their way of labeling [directions] invariably seems 'obvious' and does not require explanation, while all other schemes seem to them strange. One thing we learn from studying this material is that the cardinal directions—east, west, south, north—have not been basic to the directional schemes of most of the world's cultures. What our culture has taught us, that the cardinal directions are obvious, is not true historically" (p. 80).

Finally, Sorenson turns to passages in the Book of Mormon having something to do with directions. He begins by mentioning the obvious difference between terms such as *north* and *northward*, *south* and *southward*. He then jumps to what I consider an unsupportable conclusion. "By their frequency of using the '-ward' suffix, we can infer that Mormon and his ancestors used a somewhat different cultural scheme for directions than we do" (p. 80). Why is this a reasonable inference? Did Mormon use the suffix or did Joseph Smith, in his attempt to express a Nephite concept? How does frequency of use

necessarily require a different directional system? What if the Nephite directional scheme were exactly the same as ours, but the more important geographic areas were not directly *north* or *south* of the Nephites? Wouldn't Joseph Smith then refer to *northward* and *southward* as a matter of accuracy and fact, rather than to indicate a different directional scheme? Indeed, in an earlier chapter of *Mormon's Map*, Sorenson uses the term *northward* to help explain his reason for tilting the hourglass-shaped Nephite lands away from a strict north-south axis (pp. 18–20). That is, his argument about the need for a tilt in the axis of the Nephite land of promise is founded on an interpretation of the Nephite directional system so that it included cardinal directions. Clearly, this matter has not been thoroughly examined, and we have no reason at this point to disregard a directional system based on cardinal directions.

Sorenson then provides a second example that he thinks should lead us to be cautious when interpreting the Nephite directional system. He contrasts the use of the terms *came* and *went* in the Book of Mormon. He speculates that the distinction may have something to do with the place where the historian was recording the events, but then he notes that this contrast has not yet been analyzed systematically.

The best that Sorenson seems to be able to muster in this section is an expression of caution. “Beware of making assumptions about meanings that may prove to be misleading because they spring from modern-day assumptions rather than from ancient ways” (p. 81). However, Sorenson has not guided us through an examination of passages leading to the conclusion that a literal reading is not appropriate when it comes to the Nephite directional system. In fact, he acknowledges that not enough work has been done on this topic. While commenting that “directional matters” are often “subtle,” he expressly notes that there is much yet to be considered “before we even know all the right questions about Nephite direction systems” (p. 81).

In contrast, Clark's interpretation of the directions used by Nephite authors is, at least initially, “literal” and thus builds on the foundation of textual analysis. Clark specifies his directional assumptions as follows:

I assume that the Nephite directional system was internally consistent and that this consistency persisted throughout the period of their history. I do not pretend to know how Nephite “north” relates to the north of today’s compass, and such information is irrelevant for my present purpose of reconstructing an internal geography. I do assume, however, that regardless of what any “real” orientation may have been, Nephite north was 180 degrees from Nephite south, and both were 90 degrees off of east and west. The directional suffix “-ward” is here loosely interpreted to mean “in the general direction of.” Thus, I read “northward” as “in a general northerly direction.” Finally, all directions are directions from “somewhere.” I assume the central reference point was the city of Zarahemla, located in the “center” of the land of Zarahemla (Helaman 1:24–27).²⁰

Clark’s initial view of Nephite directions relies precisely on our own culture’s cardinal directions. Our “literal” understanding is, and to my mind must be, our first and most unsophisticated interpretation of the meanings associated with words used in the Book of Mormon. This “literal” approach to Book of Mormon directions also happens to be consistent with concepts of direction and geographical organization that were familiar to Joseph Smith and his contemporaries.²¹ As Joseph translated the Book of Mormon, he seems to have used the directional and geographical concepts familiar to him. This is, and must be, our second level of interpretation of a word or phrase

20. Clark, “Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies,” 25.

21. In 1837, Wilford Woodruff recorded in his diary that “Joseph presented us in some degree the plot of the city of Kirtland. . . . The city extended to the east, west, north, and south.” Dean C. Jessee, ed., *The Papers of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 1:113 n. 3. The plot plan of the city of Nauvoo, Illinois, the headquarters of the church from 1839 to 1846, was laid out with square city blocks and streets oriented east-west and north-south. See Richard N. Holzapfel and T. Jeffery Cottle, *Old Mormon Nauvoo 1839–1846: Historical Photographs and Guide* (Provo, Utah: Grandin Book, 1990), 2, 25, 30.

mentioned in the Book of Mormon. In most cases, the first and second levels of interpretation probably will be identical, but this need not always be the case. The English language has changed in some respects since the time of Joseph Smith.

Near the end of his article, Clark describes in much greater detail another related directional pattern when he seeks to interpret Helaman 3:8. In that verse, the Nephites are said to have expanded “from the land southward to the land northward, and . . . spread inso-much that they began to cover the face of the whole earth, from the sea south to the sea north, from the sea west to the sea east.” Clark acknowledges that his reading of the Book of Mormon directional system can be literal only to a point. Then another level of interpretation is called for and additional assumptions must be made. Clark refers to this change in interpretative process as requiring an explanation that is metaphorical:

The passage in Helaman may have been meant in a metaphorical rather than a literal way. Explaining away difficult passages as metaphors goes against one of my guiding assumptions for dealing with the text, but in this case I think it is well justified. North and south sea probably have no more concrete meaning than the phrases “filling the whole earth” and “as numerous as the sands of the sea.” Mormon waxes poetic whenever describing the Nephites’ peaceful golden age of uninterrupted population growth and expansion. This is understandable given the circumstances under which he wrote, and his knowledge of the certain doom of his people. It is interesting that in a parallel passage describing the same sort of population expansion [Helaman 11:20] no north or south sea is mentioned. . . .

I am convinced that the reference to a north sea and a south sea is devoid of any concrete geographical content. All specific references or allusions to Book of Mormon seas are only to the east and west seas. Any geography that tries to

accommodate a north and south sea, I think, is doomed to fail. But we cannot dismiss the reference to these seas out of hand. If they are metaphorical, what was the metaphor?²²

With this piling up of inferences, Clark theorizes that the north and south seas mentioned in the text are not physical bodies of water. He bases this theory on the slim fact that these seas are not mentioned in one similar passage in the Book of Mormon. Hence, he moves his interpretation of Book of Mormon directions from a literal one consistent with our culture (and Joseph Smith's culture 175 years ago), where cardinal points are the principal directions, to a third level of cultural understanding (a Nephite metaphorical level) that still may have been somewhat accurately depicted by English words describing a cardinal direction system. Clark also notes that this metaphorical interpretation "would not be out of place in the Middle East at the time of Lehi; and it is remarkably close to the Mesoamerican view of their world."²³ That is, at this third level of interpretation, a nonliteral theory has been created and compared favorably with what Clark would consider appropriate external cultures to lend credence to his further sense of the meanings that might be associated with our (and Joseph Smith's) cardinal directions. Clark's conceptualized Nephite world, "as part of a metaphor for the whole earth," places Zarahemla at the center and expands outward (in the four cardinal directions) through lands and wildernesses to the four seas mentioned in Helaman 3:8.²⁴

Clark's literal interpretation of a couple of verses that mention (and don't mention) north and south seas, his identification of an interpretative problem, and then his creation of a metaphorical solution

22. Clark, "Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," 65. Clark does not refer to Mosiah 27:6, a related example, where peaceful conditions and another societal expansion occurred into what seem to have been cardinal quarters: "And there began to be much peace again in the land; and the people began to be very numerous, and began to scatter abroad upon the face of the earth, yea, on the north and on the south, on the east and on the west, building large cities and villages in all quarters of the land."

23. Clark, "Key for Evaluating Nephite Geographies," 67.

24. *Ibid.*, 66 (fig. 8), 67.

or theory are procedurally sound (but not necessarily substantively correct). He then compares the metaphorical theory with ideas from external sources he assumes were related to the Book of Mormon. This is a valid interpretative process, but not necessarily one that leads to an accurate interpretation. From a substantive point of view, one must also note that Clark's problem with the text of Helaman 3:8 is based on his inference from Helaman 11:20 that the north and south seas "probably" had no real existence. Why is that inference "probably" accurate? Are there no other passages in the Book of Mormon that might bear on this question? In how many other ways is the term *north* used in the Book of Mormon? What about uses of the term *south*? Is it impossible or just unlikely that there were north and south seas? The interpretative process dealing with north and south seas has actually just begun.

In *Mormon's Map*, Sorenson seems to throw his required caution to the wind when he interprets north and south seas literally. These seas seem to serve his purpose of tilting the axis of the Nephite promised land to an orientation similar to that of Mesoamerica. He first identifies a difference between the *land north* (five references) and the *land northward* (thirty-one references).

There is, of course, a distinction; "land northward" implies a direction somewhat off from literal north. This implication that the lands are not simply oriented to the cardinal directions is confirmed by reference to the "sea north" and the "sea south" (Helaman 3:8). These terms are used only once, in reference to the colonizing of the land northward by the Nephites, but not in connection with the land southward. The only way to have seas north and south on a literal or descriptive basis would be for the two major bodies of land to be oriented at an angle somewhat off true north-south. That would allow part of the ocean to lie toward the south of one and another part of the ocean to lie toward north of the other. (pp. 19–20)

Sorenson makes this argument from a literal point of view because he seems to be seeking to confirm the tilt he wants to give to his hourglass-shaped lands. (Note that in map 1 and all subsequent maps in the text, he does not tilt the lands the opposite way from Mesoamerica, which would seem to be an equally likely possibility under his interpretation of north and south seas.) I could not find any of the maps in *Mormon's Map* that actually show where the north and south seas were supposed to be. How were they related to the east and west seas? Why would the Nephites have referred to a land northward or southward if they didn't want to distinguish them from other lands that were literally north or south? In other words, isn't the whole concept of Nephite directions founded on a basic four-part directional system that Joseph Smith was content describing as north, south, east, and west? Frankly, my conclusion from this very brief review of Book of Mormon directions is identical to Sorenson's in one regard: so little work has apparently been done on the topic that we do not yet know all the right questions to ask.

Where Does Sorenson Think We Are Today?

I have not attempted to provide a substantive evaluation of the chapters of *Mormon's Map* that deal with Sorenson's detailed views of Book of Mormon land forms, topography, environment, distances, and civilization. I have no training or expertise in those subjects. Frankly, the task would have to begin with comparisons of Sorenson's inferences and the 1,068 verses identified as having potential geographical relevance. That will take a great deal of impartial (hopefully collaborative) work. Thus, I find myself in the position of virtually every other reader of *Mormon's Map* (Sorenson excepted). I must rely on my own rational responses to Sorenson's detailed interpretations and those responses include "interesting," "challenging," and "what if . . ." but hardly anything substantive.

To his credit, Sorenson also helps us in this area by concluding *Mormon's Map* with a chapter entitled "So How Much Do We Know?" In essence, he reviews his own work. He compares the version of

“Mormon’s Map” he has been able to construct with the widely duplicated maps that early European cartographers produced: “They drew in coastlines on the basis of reports that were not very clear or full from voyagers who had traversed portions of the coast. Where they did not possess direct information, those mapmakers made inferences—guesses may be more accurate. As for the interior spaces beyond the coasts, their information was even sketchier. Still, the maps they drafted were avidly sought by later voyagers and served them well enough. The comprehensive ‘Mormon’s Map’ on the inside front cover of this book can prove useful too” (p. 126).

Sorenson then lists the three uses to which he thinks “a map in this tentative condition” (p. 127) can be put. First, it provides “a model that we can apply to stories from the record to check their consistency and perhaps shed new light on factors [the stories] involved that had not occurred to us before.” Second, “we may discern new questions about geography . . . gaps in our knowledge for which we might seek answers by consulting Mormon’s text anew.” Third, “the map summarizes a set of criteria . . . against which to evaluate proposals for where in the external world Nephite lands were located” (p. 127).

This is a succinct summary of where we are today. “Mormon’s Map” is surely “tentative,” but we may finally be in a position to begin filling in the blank spots in our understanding through a reasoned process. By combining Clark’s “elemental” geography and interpretative process with Sorenson’s more comprehensive *Geography of Book of Mormon Events* and *Mormon’s Map*, we have a solid foundation for a collaborative project to consciously produce a generally acceptable interpretation of the Nephite map described in the text of the Book of Mormon. We have a method for identifying interpretative issues, pulling together the textual passages that have been identified on each issue as controlling, determining various interpretative theories about those passages, and then comparing the theories for simplicity, consistency, uniformity, and uncertainty in our interpretation of ideas and terminology. Will such a collaborative project necessarily produce a duplicate of Clark’s “elemental” geography or Sorenson’s *Mormon’s Map*? I have met John Clark and John Sorenson and admire

them both, but I don't think I know anyone who could answer that question today. Why don't we find the answer?

When one approaches a landfall from the sea, the barest edge of land first appears as a dark contour rising up on the horizon. *Mormon's Map* leaves me with a clear sense that it represents just the first contour of a wonderful, exciting, and "promised" land filled with information and levels of meaning that are yet to be discovered, understood, and communicated. Thank you, Professor Clark, for your attention to the interpretative process. Thank you, Professor Sorenson, for extending that process into *Mormon's Map*. "Land ho!"

HOW MUCH WAS KNOWN ABOUT CHIASMUS IN 1829 WHEN THE BOOK OF MORMON WAS TRANSLATED?

John W. Welch

The study of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon has fascinated Latter-day Saints for over thirty years, and during this time our understanding of this literary feature has improved. At the same time, interest in chiasmus continues to hold the attention of biblical scholars, as is attested by the steady appearance of academic publications utilizing it as a mode of literary analysis. Over the years, I continue to find that the presence of chiasmus in strategic places in the structure of several Book of Mormon passages tells us much about the artistry, complexity, precision, subtlety, meaning, multiple authorship, and origins of the Book of Mormon text.

In this survey, after pointing out a few recent developments that may be of general interest to readers of the *FARMS Review*, I wish to revisit and update some previous research on the historical emergence of chiasmus in the nineteenth century in order to address the specific question, How much was known by scholars about chiasmus in 1829 when the Book of Mormon was being translated? In a way, of course, this question is irrelevant to the Book of Mormon, since the only real issue is how much *Joseph Smith* knew about chiasmus in 1829, not how much was known about it in Germany, England, Boston, or Pennsylvania by scholars or theologians. There is no direct evidence, as far as I am aware, that Joseph Smith had any actual knowledge of chiasmus. If he had, it is odd that he never hinted as much and that no one apparently ever thought to look for such a word pattern in

the Book of Mormon until 1967. Still, probing the level of how much awareness people had of chiasmus in 1829 in the world at large offers circumstantial evidence about how much Joseph Smith *could* have known concerning chiasmus, and that assessment becomes pertinent whenever a claim is made about the likelihood or unlikelihood of any such possibility.

Regarding the current study of chiasmus in general, the *Chiasmus Bibliography* published in 1999 through the FARMS Research Press should be a point of departure for anyone interested in the nature and significance of chiasmus in the Bible, in the Book of Mormon, or elsewhere in world literature.¹ Gauging from the letters we have received from scholars to whom that bibliography has been sent, this reference work—which lists and indexes hundreds of books and articles that present scores of chiastic passages of various lengths and configurations—has been enthusiastically received by academicians. It was also favorably reviewed in the *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, which found this research tool to be “useful and well-presented.”² Anyone interested in this subject will want to consult that bibliography and to study the works listed there. Scholarly work on chiasmus continues to appear, as is attested by the stream of publications that have appeared (or that we have become aware of) since 1999.³ Strong interest in chiasmus in academic circles

1. John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, eds., *Chiasmus Bibliography* (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1999).

2. Roger H. Mortimer, review of *Chiasmus Bibliography*, by John W. Welch and Daniel B. McKinlay, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 25/1 (2002): 120.

3. Examples of recent publications using chiasmus not found in the 1999 *Chiasmus Bibliography* include the following: Martin Arneth, “Die antiassyrische Reform Josias von Juda: Überlegungen zur Komposition und Intention von 2 Reg 23, 4–15,” *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 7 (2001): 189–216; Loren F. Bliese, “Chiastic and Homogeneous Metrical Structures Enhanced by Word Patterns in Obadiah,” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 6/3 (1993): 210–27; “The Poetics of Habakkuk,” *Journal of Translation and Textlinguistics* 12 (1999): 47–75, and “Translating Psalm 23 in Traditional Afar Poetry,” in *Hebrew Poetry in the Bible: A Guide for Understanding and for Translating*, ed. Lynell Zogbo and Ernst R. Wendland (New York: United Bible Societies, 2000), 185–94; Wayne Brouwer, *The Literary Development of John 13–17: A Chiastic Reading* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2001); Jonathan A. Draper, “The Genesis

is reflected in the fact that publishing houses such as the Sheffield Academic Press, Doubleday, and the Society of Biblical Literature have published books in this area. I was pleased to be asked by the Society of Biblical Literature's *Review of Biblical Literature* to review John Breck's significant work, *The Shape of Biblical Language*,⁴ showing continued interest in this literary topic. Dan McKinlay and I plan to produce a supplement to the *Chiasmus Bibliography*, and so we welcome information on any such items we may have missed.

Various papers, presentations, and Web postings⁵ continue to discuss chiasmus from a Latter-day Saint point of view. Kevin Barney's essay in this issue of the *FARMS Review*, which deals with the harmonization of various Isaiah passages, begins with observations on the issue of chiasmus in Isaiah and how to recognize and display it. Barney also responds to remarks by Dan Vogel at the Sunstone Symposium in 2001.⁶ Discussions of chiasmus also continue to appear in casual conversations, in devotional settings, in classrooms, or on corner soapboxes. Some dismiss it as contrived and selective;⁷ others

and Narrative Thrust of the Paraenesis in the Sermon on the Mount," *Journal for the Study of the New Testament* 75 (1999): 25–48; Richard Y. Duerden, "Crossings: Class, Gender, Chiasmus, and the Cross in Aemilia Lanyer's *Salve Deus Rex Judaeorum*," *Literature and Belief* 19/1–2 (1999): 131–52; Peter F. Ellis, "The Authenticity of John 21," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 36/1–2 (1992): 17–25, and "Inclusion, Chiasm, and the Division of the Fourth Gospel," *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 43/3–4 (1999): 269–338; Nathan Klaus, *Pivot Patterns in the Former Prophets*, JSOT Supplement 247 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999); Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus 17–22* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), and *Leviticus 23–27* (New York: Doubleday, 2001); Ralf Rothenbusch, "Die kasuistische Rechtssammlung im 'Bundesbuch,'" *Zeitschrift für altorientalische und biblische Rechtsgeschichte* 7 (2001): 243–72; and Jerome T. Walsh, "Genesis 2:4b–3:24: A Synchronic Approach," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 96/2 (1977): 161–77, and *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 2001).

4. John W. Welch, review of *The Shape of Biblical Language: Chiasmus in the Scriptures and Beyond*, by John Breck, *Review of Biblical Literature* (www.bookreviews.org/bookdetail.asp?TitleId=2329&CodePage=2329, 2 March 2000, available as recently as 17 March 2003).

5. See www.jefflindsay.com/chiasmus.shtml, available as recently as 17 March 2003.

6. See Kevin Barney, "Isaiah Interwoven," in this number of the *FARMS Review*, 353–402.

7. Earl M. Wunderli, "FARMS Redux: Why I Don't Trust FARMS Research," Sunstone Symposium, 2002.

embrace it as powerful and amazing.⁸ I included a brief section on chiasmus in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*;⁹ and a lengthy statistical analysis of the unlikelihood that chiasmus in Alma 36 could have appeared by chance has recently been conducted collaboratively by two Latter-day Saint physics professors, one at the University of West Virginia and the other at Utah State University.¹⁰

In general, when people ask questions about whether a particular passage qualifies as chiasmic, I refer them to my article entitled “Criteria for Identifying the Presence of Chiasmus.”¹¹ All chiasms are not created equal, and a good deal of confusion and misrepresentation could be avoided if certain criteria were stated and applied more precisely and more consistently. Likewise, people often wonder, What does the presence of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon indicate? I have discussed this subject in an essay entitled “What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?”¹² As shown in that essay, the presence of chiasmus is indicative of many different qualities and characteristics of various passages in the Book of Mormon, just as its presence can be significant in various ways in the Bible or in other texts.

Another set of frequently raised questions includes: Did Joseph Smith know about chiasmus in 1829 when he translated the Book of Mormon? Could he have known of chiasmus from scholarly sources in his information environment? When and where was chiasmus

8. J. Milton Rich, *The Book of Mormon: Another Witness of Jesus Christ, on Trial* (Salt Lake City: Rich, 2002), 244–50.

9. John W. Welch, “A Steady Stream of Significant Recognitions,” in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 340–47. For another recent examination of chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, see John W. Welch, “Parallelism and Chiasmus in Benjamin’s Speech,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech: “That Ye May Learn Wisdom,”* ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 315–410.

10. Boyd F. Edwards and W. Farrell Edwards, “Did Chiasms Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?” (unpublished paper, 2002), 34 pp, forthcoming in *BYU Studies*.

11. John W. Welch, “Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 1–14; reprinted in Welch and McKinlay, *Chiasmus Bibliography*, 157–74.

12. John W. Welch, “What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?” in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, ed. Noel Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 199–224.

discovered by biblical scholars? When was this manner of literary analysis published and disseminated, and when did it become generally accepted? Such questions occur to those who learn about chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. I asked these questions in 1967 after I learned of the subject at a lecture in a Catholic theological seminary in Regensburg, Germany, and subsequently discovered chiasmus in the Book of Mormon. Most of what I learned about chiasmus in those early months in Germany came from my reading of Nils W. Lund's *Chiasmus in the New Testament*,¹³ which I ordered from the University of North Carolina Press while I was still serving in Regensburg. I returned to Brigham Young University and, as an undergraduate student, wrote a paper entitled "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," which I submitted to *BYU Studies* in 1968. It was accepted in the spring of 1969 and published in that year's autumn issue.¹⁴ In the fall of 1969, I continued my research on chiasmus in the Ugaritic epics, the Old Testament, the New Testament, and Greek and Latin authors for my 1970 master's thesis in the BYU Classics Department.

My thesis focused primarily on defining and describing three forms of chiasmus (simple, compound, and complex) found in various ancient literatures, but I also devoted a dozen pages in my thesis to what I had been able to learn about the emerging awareness of chiasmus in the early nineteenth century.¹⁵ Prompted considerably by my reading of Lund,¹⁶ I dealt with the question of how much was

13. Nils W. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1942; reprint, Boston, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1992).

14. John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 10/1 (1969): 69–84.

15. John W. Welch, "A Study Relating Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon to Chiasmus in the Old Testament, Ugaritic Epics, Homer, and Selected Greek and Latin Authors" (master's thesis, Brigham Young University, 1970), 100–113. Notes 18–38, 40, 44, 46–48, 51, 57–58, 94–100, and 106, below, together with their accompanying text in this review essay, correspond directly to notes 1–29 and 32–38, together with their accompanying text, in my 1970 thesis.

16. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 35–40; mentioned also in John W. Welch, ed., *Chiasmus in Antiquity: Structures, Analyses, Exegesis* (Hildesheim: Gerstenberg Verlag, 1981; reprint Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1999), 9.

known about chiasmus in the nineteenth century.¹⁷ I argued there that until chiasmus was noticed in the New Testament and it became clear that the presence of certain Hebraisms in the New Testament was important to its analysis and interpretation, Christian scholars found little reason to occupy themselves with the form. While some study of chiasmus in the works of ancient Greek and Latin authors existed earlier,¹⁸ biblical scholars began detecting chiasmus in the scriptures mainly in the first quarter of that century. I showed that the works published in London by Bishop John Jebb¹⁹ in 1820 and by Reverend Thomas Boys²⁰ in 1824 and 1825 were pioneering efforts in the study of chiasmus in the scriptures. Although their techniques have since been refined,²¹ I argued that their conclusions were largely sound.

A few additions, clarifications, and one main correction must now be made. The following is based largely on research conducted in Independence, Missouri, in 2000, and at Oxford, England, in 2001. In particular, it is now evident that John Jebb's 1820 publication became better known in certain circles in the 1820s than was previously thought. Although copies of Jebb's work probably did not make it across the Atlantic in the 1820s, as has been previously conjectured, Jebb's *Sacred Literature* was positively discussed in a large treatise on the critical study of the Bible by Thomas Horne in 1825. That edition

17. Welch, "A Study Relating Chiasmus," 100–113.

18. See sources cited in John Jebb, *Sacred Literature* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1820), 69–74; for later attention to chiasmus, see Anton A. Draeger, *Syntax und Stil des Tacitus*, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Teubner, 1882); Franz Peters, *Zur Wortstellung in den Oden des Horaz* (Münster, Germany: Gymnasium-Progr., 1870); Konrad Meyer, *Die Wort- und Satzbildung bei Sallust* (Magdeburg, Germany: Friese, 1880).

19. Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, cited in Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," 72 n. 3, and in Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 37.

20. Thomas Boys, *Tactica Sacra* (London: Seely, 1824) and *Key to the Book of Psalms* (London: Seely, 1825), cited in Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 38; Boys (1824) is cited in Welch, *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 9, and in John W. Welch, "Chiasmus in Biblical Law: An Approach to the Structure of Legal Texts in the Hebrew Bible," *Jewish Law Association Studies* 4 (1990): 7 n. 11. See also chart 15–20, "Chiasmus in Philemon," in John W. Welch and John F. Hall, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), based on and citing Boys (1824), 65–67.

21. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 38.

of Horne was published not only in London but also in Philadelphia, and so information about introverted parallelism was present in the United States earlier than I and others had suspected. Yet it still appears unlikely that Joseph Smith had any knowledge of Jebb's ideas before he completed his translation of the Book of Mormon, and the presence of chiasmus in that text remains significant. Indeed, Joseph Smith acquired a copy of the 1825 edition of Horne's treatise, but that did not happen until January, 1834, well after the Book of Mormon was in print, as I discuss below. In addition, it would remain several years after the publication of the Book of Mormon in 1830 before the study of chiasmus in the Bible would receive further currency in the scholarly world.²²

Early Explorers of Hebrew Style in the Bible

The work of two men—D. Johannes Albertus Bengel²³ of the University of Tübingen and Robert Lowth²⁴ of Oxford—preceded that of Jebb and Boys. Bengel is interesting because in 1742, he was perhaps the first to use the term *chiasmus* to describe the phenomenon in the Bible, yet his works had little influence on his contemporaries.²⁵ Lowth is interesting for exactly the opposite reasons: his works were very influential, especially upon the minds of Jebb and Boys, yet he was never aware of the phenomenon of chiasmus.

22. Ibid., 40.

23. D. Johannes A. Bengel, *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, 3rd ed. (Tübingen: Sumtibus Ludov. Frid. Fues., 1836), cited in Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 35. The first edition of Bengel's work was published in 1742; an English translation was published by C. T. Lewis and M. R. Vincent in Philadelphia, 1860–62.

24. Robert Lowth, *Lectures on the Sacred Poetry of the Hebrews*, trans. G. Gregory (London: Johnson, 1787); American editions were published by Joseph T. Buckingham in Boston in 1815 and by Crocker and Brewster in Andover, Massachusetts, in 1829.

25. Nils Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament," *American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures* 46 (1930): 105: "I am not in possession of any information that enables me to connect Boys's work with the researches of Jebb or the still earlier observations of Bengel on chiasmus." Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, 69–70, the only one to make use of Bengel's comments on chiasmus, states: "I gladly acknowledge considerable obligations . . . to several valuable remarks dispersed through the *Gnomon* of Bengel," which have "afforded some *coincidences*, rather than *hints*, on the subject of epanodos."

Bengel's *Gnomon Novi Testamenti*, written entirely in Latin and not translated into English until 1860–62, mentions chiasmus in its glossary of literary devices found in the New Testament. Bengel includes 103 entries from *aetiologia* to *zeugma*; the entry on chiasmus, being two and a half pages long, is one of the longest sections in his glossary. Under chiasmus, Bengel discusses two types of parallelism: *chiasmus directus* and *chiasmus inversus*. According to his definition (original Latin given below in the footnote), *chiasmus directus* occurs when the first word in the first part refers to the first word in the second part and the second word in the first part to the second in the second part.²⁶ Today this is not considered a form of chiasmus at all, for it is simply direct parallelism of the form a-b-a'-b'. *Chiasmus inversus*, on the other hand, occurs when the first of the first refers to the last of the second and the first of the second to the last of the first.²⁷ This is a veritable form of chiasmus. Bengel gives twelve examples, eight of which are “direct chiasms” and only four of which are “inverse chiasms” (Matthew 12:22; John 5:21–27; Romans 9:24; Philemon 1:5). In later entries in the glossary, Bengel discusses *epanodos*, which he defines as repetition (*repetitio vocum*) either of certain sounds or of meanings (*vel sonum vel quoad sensum*). By repetition, Bengel means something with the form a-b-b-c (repeating b) or with an alternating pattern such as a-b-b-a-b (for example, Galatians 2:16). He also mentions *hysteron proteron* (the last first), but he concludes: “In the New Testament *hysteron proteron* scarcely occurs, because the sacred scriptures 1) either maintain an order of things according to a temporal sequence or 2) use *chiasmus inversus*.”²⁸ Seeming to argue against what must have been a prevailing scholarly bias against the felicity of chiasmus, Bengel asserts that “Chiasmus is not an error but

26. Bengel, *Gnomon*, 758: “Chiasmus directus est, cum vox aut propositio prior in primo pari referri debet ad vocem aut propositionem priorem in secundo pari: et vox aut propositio in primo pari ad vocem aut propositionem posteriorem in secundo pari.”

27. Ibid.: “Chiasmus inversus est, cum vox aut propositio prior in primo pari referri debet ad vocem aut propositionem posteriorem in secundo pari: et vox aut propositio posterior in primo pari ad vocem aut propositionem priorem in secundo pari.”

28. Ibid., 772.

an elegant arrangement of words.”²⁹ Bengel’s understanding of chiasmus was sufficient for an initial statement of the phenomenon, yet it obviously lacks clarity since he considered direct parallelisms a form of chiasmus. Unfortunately, Bengel’s work was neither continued by German scholars nor adopted by English theologians.

Lowth’s lectures on Hebrew poetry, delivered at Oxford in 1753, laid down the basic principles of parallelism as the keys for unlocking the literary qualities of the Hebrew Bible. Lowth divided parallelisms into three categories: synonymous, synthetic, and antithetic. Synonymous and synthetic parallelisms consist of lines with similar meanings or similar syntax, respectively; by antithetical parallelism, Lowth meant two lines in which the second introduces an opposite or contrasting idea but in a form that still directly parallels the first (see, for example, Proverbs 15:1). Lowth, however, indicates no knowledge whatever of chiasmus or anything like it, and for this he was criticized by Jebb.³⁰ For the same reason, Lowth is only of general background relevance to the history of chiasmus in the nineteenth century.

The Discovery of Chiasmus as a Form of Biblical Parallelism

To John Jebb, Bishop of Limerick, belongs the credit for being the first English writer to explicate chiasmus as a distinct type of parallelism prevalent in the Old and New Testaments. Thanks to the correspondence that Jebb carried on with his friend Alexander Knox, it is possible to follow the development of his work.

In 1805 Knox put Lowth’s lectures into Jebb’s hands, and in 1819 Jebb expressed his debt of gratitude to Knox. “Without you,” he says, “I never might have read Lowth.”³¹ Lowth had limited his study of

29. Ibid.: “Qui nihil vitii, elegantiae quiddam habet.”

30. Jebb, in *Sacred Literature*, 55, writes: “His distribution of the clauses into lines is subversive of the order manifestly designed by the prophet.” Also, introverted parallelism is “unnoticed as such by Bishop Lowth, or by subsequent writers on the subject.” Ibid., 53. “It is extraordinary that the peculiarity of [introverted] construction in this passage [Isaiah 27:12–13] should have escaped the penetration of Bishop Lowth.” Ibid., 55.

31. *Thirty Years of Correspondence between John Jebb and Alexander Knox*, ed. Charles Foster (London: Duncan, 1834), letter 173, 27 September 1815, 1:380.

parallelism almost exclusively to the Old Testament, but Knox and Jebb applied Lowth's principles of parallelism to the New Testament as well. Around 1805 their letters became filled with ideas about the structure of passages in the New Testament, and when they realized that some of the passages that they had found could not be explained fully in terms of Lowth's principles, they began to doubt the adequacy of Lowth's definitions. Jebb thought that Bishop Lowth had not pursued his own system far enough: "Lowth's taste confined him, for the most part, to the sublimer order; to the ode, the elegy, the idyllium, &c. If he had possessed more philosophy, he would have penetrated deeper into the nature, the uses, and the elegance of the sententious."³² To a large extent, this dissatisfaction with Lowth provided the motivating impulse behind Jebb's own work. He set out to correct Lowth's widely accepted definitions of the species of parallelism.³³ Because of this, Jebb's work met opposition from the outset. Lowth's fame was international, but Jebb's was hardly even domestic.³⁴ Jebb's attempt to criticize Lowth failed partly because of Lowth's established prestige in theological circles and partly because of mistakes that Jebb himself made.³⁵

Although Jebb's early opinions were influenced by Knox, Jebb became more independent as time passed. While the two men shared an interest in Hebrew composition, in letter 151 it is clear that Knox was interested in the thought behind the passages while Jebb was concerned with the structure within the passages. In their correspondence Knox repeatedly raised interpretive and philosophic issues, but Jebb was content to stay on the level of philology. For example, Knox was interested in epanodos as a psychological principle of cli-

32. Ibid., letter 63, 25 January 1805, 1:390–91. Jebb wished to give greater emphasis to meaningful, literal translation in the area of "the sententious poetry."

33. Ibid., letter 175, 10 October 1819, 1:383: "Bishop Lowth's definition of this species of parallelism, ought to be corrected."

34. A German edition of Lowth's *Lectures* appeared in 1758 and an American edition in 1815. Jebb's book was never reprinted.

35. For example, Jebb was convinced that Hebrew poetry never used meter. See Foster, *Thirty Years of Correspondence*, letter 175, 10 October 1819, 1:385.

max; Jebb, on the other hand, was interested in it solely as a figure of speech. In 1818 Knox asked Jebb to collaborate with him on a theological, philosophical, and interpretative application of the principles of parallelism,³⁶ but Jebb declined since he was determined to avoid exegesis even at the risk of offending his friend.³⁷ In 1819, when Jebb was nearing the completion of his book on the Bible as literature, Knox commented to Jebb:

I quite agree with you that your philological investigations are not to be embarrassed with theological ideas. If therefore you find the latter mingled in any instance with my suggestions you will be aware that they are by no means intended for your adoption, but solely for your fuller view of what strikes me on the subject.³⁸

Jebb's design in *Sacred Literature* was to be as expository as possible, leaving the interpretative work for someone else.

Jebb's *Sacred Literature* is remarkable. Published in 1820, its review of the principles laid down by Lowth is comprehensive, its awareness of Bengel is astute, and its observations on the style and structures of a great number of passages in the New Testament are original. The frequency with which Jebb and Knox mention epanodos in their correspondence during 1818 and 1819 suggests that Jebb may have considered his addition of the notion of "introverted parallelism" the most valuable contribution of his book. Some of his Old Testament examples of introverted parallelism (which are structural, not grammatical; several are complex, not just simple) include the following:³⁹

36. Ibid., letter 173, 27 September 1815, 1:378–79.

37. Ibid., 1:379.

38. Ibid., letter 152, 10 October 1819, 1:398–99.

39. Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, 53–57, also displays an a-b-b-a pattern in Psalm 123:1–2, an a-b-c-c-b-a arrangement in Ezekiel 1:27 and Psalm 84:5–7, and two of the same in Isaiah 27:12 and 13. Although others had previously observed this phenomenon (on p. 70 n. 6 he mentions observations by Hammond, scattered remarks by Bengel, and comments by Wakefield on Matthew 7:6; and on p. 358 he mentions an entry on chiasmus appended by Burke to the "Index of Technical Terms" in the third edition of Bengel's *Gnomon* in 1773), Jebb considered himself the first to explore "the rationale of it" (p. 65).

My son, if thine heart be wise;
My heart also shall rejoice;
Yea, my reins shall rejoice;
When thy lips speak right things.
(Proverbs 23:15–16)

From the hand of hell I will redeem them;
From death I will reclaim them:
Death! I will be thy pestilence;
Hell! I will be thy burning plague.
(Hosea 13:14)

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold:
The work of men's hand;
They have mouths, but they speak not;
They have eyes, but they see not;
They have ears, but they hear not;
Neither is there any breath in their mouths;
They who make them, are like unto them;
So are all they who put their trust in them.⁴⁰
(Psalm 135:15–18)

In analyzing passages in the New Testament, Jebb made brief use in section 12 of introverted parallelism in commenting on an eight-part structure (a-b-c-d-b-d-c-a) of the “epanodostic kind” in Matthew 15:3–6:

- a And why do ye transgress the commandment of God, by your tradition?
- b For God commanded, saying:
- c Honour thy father and thy mother;

40. As Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, 57, describes this parallelism, in the first and eighth lines are the idolatrous heathen and those who put their trust in idols; in the second and seventh lines, the fabrication and the fabricators; in the third line, mouths without articulation; in the sixth, mouths without breath; in the fourth, eyes without vision; and in the fifth, ears without hearing.

- d And he who revileth father or mother, let
him die the death:
- b But ye say:
- d Whosoever shall say to his father or mother, [be
that] a gift, by which thou mightest have
been relieved from me;
- c Must also not honour his father or his mother:
- a Thus have ye nullified the commandment of God by
your tradition.⁴¹

Then he took up this subject in earnest in section 16, toward the end of his volume. In doing so, he hoped to shed light on scriptural interpretation by drawing attention to this “technical arrangement, which has not hitherto been investigated as it deserves.”⁴² He offered about a dozen examples,⁴³ including

No man can serve two masters:
For, either he will hate the one, and love the other;
Or he will adhere to the one, and neglect the other:
Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.
(Matthew 6:24)

Give not that which is holy to the dogs;
Neither cast your pearls before the swine;
Lest they trample them under their feet;
And turn about and rend you.
(Matthew 7:6)

Behold, I send you forth as sheep,
In the midst of wolves;
Be ye therefore prudent as the serpents;
And harmless as the doves.
(Matthew 10:16)

41. Jebb, *Sacred Literature*, 245, letters added. See also a-b-c-c-b-a, Matthew 11:28–30 and Hebrews 9:11–12; *ibid.*, 208, 350.

42. *Ibid.*, 336.

43. *Ibid.*, 336, 338, 340, 342, 343; see also 344, 345, 350, 351.

Behold therefore the gentleness,
And the severity of God;
Towards those indeed who have fallen, severity;
But towards thee, gentleness.
(Romans 11:22)

But ye are sanctified;
But ye are justified;
By the name of the Lord Jesus;
And by the spirit of our God.
(1 Corinthians 6:11)

Along with these and other examples, Jebb offered the following explanation of the rationale behind introverted parallelism:

Two pair[s] of terms or propositions, conveying two important, but not equally important notions, are to be so distributed, as to bring out the sense in the strongest and most impressive manner: now, this result will be best attained, by commencing and concluding, with the notions to which prominence is to be given; and by placing in the centre the less important notion.⁴⁴

Jebb also stated: “Some are disposed to maintain that [introverted parallelism] is purely classical; and it does *sometimes* occur in Greek and Latin authors; but it is so prevalent, and so peculiarly marked, in the Sacred Volume, that it may be justly accounted a Hebraism; and, as I am disposed to believe, a feature of Hebrew poetry.”⁴⁵ Despite the extensive work he had done, Jebb still did not wish “to recommend *theory*, but *experiment*.”⁴⁶ He felt that even if his theories should not prove to be immediately profitable, they would lay the foundation for future interpretations of scripture.⁴⁷

44. Ibid., 60.

45. Ibid., 65, emphasis in original. Jebb discusses Greek and Latin works on pp. 70–74.

46. Ibid., 59.

47. Ibid. The copy of this book in Harvard’s Hollis Library was not acquired until 1910, as discussed below.

A Bolder Effort

Soon after Jebb published *Sacred Literature*, the Reverend Thomas Boys (M.A., Trinity College, Cambridge, and Curate of Widford, Hertfordshire) pushed the theory of “mutual correspondence in the members of sentences,” as he termed parallelism, even further. E. W. Bullinger apparently believed that Boys developed his own theories on parallelism independently of Jebb,⁴⁸ but, in his 1824 publication, Boys openly acknowledged his indebtedness to Jebb, considering it “satisfactorily proved [by Jebb], that the rule of composition, recognized as prevailing in the Old Testament, prevails also in the New.”⁴⁹ He also displayed Jebb’s six basic Old Testament examples of introverted parallelism, followed by twenty-nine New Testament examples that Boys himself had noticed.⁵⁰

In two separate volumes,⁵¹ Boys discussed and demonstrated the principles of *correspondence*, his appellation for the notions of parallelism. He sought to apply these principles to longer, complete prosaic compositions or books within the Bible, not just individual verses or short passages.

Not widely circulated,⁵² Boys’s first volume, *Tactica Sacra*, consists mainly of hard-to-follow tabular arrangements—complete with parallel-columned Greek and English texts—of the epistles of 1 and

48. In a memoir by Reverend Sidney Thelwall appearing in Bullinger’s 1890 edition of Boys’s *Key to the Book of Psalms*, ix, we read: “What led to his Boys’ [sic] discovery of the great principle of Parallelism, or (as he preferred to call it) Correspondence, I know not.”

49. Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, advertisement before p. 1.

50. *Ibid.*, 3–7.

51. Boys, *Tactica Sacra* and *Key to the Book of Psalms*.

52. BYU’s Interlibrary Loan office was unable to locate either of these books in any library in the United States at the time I wrote my thesis. I first saw these volumes in the Bodleian Library when I was studying at Oxford in 1970–72. I am aware of no evidence that these books or any knowledge of them reached America before 1829, although in theory that is possible. Recently one of my assistants found that Harvard’s Hollis Library holds *Key to the Book of Psalms* (no acquisition date available) but has no copy of *Tactica Sacra*, “which seems to be entirely unknown in America,” according to Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 38.

2 Thessalonians, 2 Peter, and Philemon.⁵³ The most impressive is the last, which is displayed as a complete structure with nine paired elements in inverted order.⁵⁴ His conclusion is nicely presented:

So far as parallelism prevails in a book, everything is *double*. Ideas are taken up twice over. The leading topic of a passage reappears in another passage: with so much of variation, that there is no tautology; yet with so much of correspondence, that the mutual reference is unquestionable. Thus, whether the parallelism be a verse or two, or a whole epistle, it may always be reduced to the simple form of two passages parallel to one [an]other.⁵⁵

Boys's second volume was entitled *A Key to the Book of Psalms*. Chapter 1 comprises a large portion of the book and deals with alternate parallelisms, although it also offers numerous examples of a-b-b-a and more complicated introverted arrangements in its lengthy introduction. Chapter 2 gives copious examples, including the Hebrew text, of short a-b-b-a word patterns in the psalms while suggesting a few larger patterns (usually involving large blocks of undifferentiated and unbalanced text). Thus, Boys viewed Psalm 25 as having an overall A-B-C-B-A structure; Psalm 30 is presented as A-B-C-C-B-A; and Psalm 135 is A-B-C(a.b.)-D-D-C(a.b.)-B-A.⁵⁶ Boys was aware of passages containing correspondences that can be described as chiasmic, yet his work had limitations. In the opinion of Nils Lund,

53. The epistle of 1 Thessalonians is arranged overall as A-B(a.b.)-B(a.b.)-A, but the details are difficult to follow. The letter of 2 Thessalonians is mapped out as A-B(a.b.c.)-B(a.b.c.)-A, labeled unimpressively as epistolary-thanksgiving-prayer-admonition-thanksgiving-prayer-admonition-epistolary. Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, 21. Second Peter is slightly more complicated than 2 Thessalonians but is essentially similar to it. *Ibid.*, 37.

54. Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, 67. This double nine-part inverted system is displayed and discussed in my chapter "Chiasmus in the New Testament," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 225–26, published in 1981.

55. Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, 72.

56. Boys, *Key to the Book of Psalms*, 122, 127, 138.

While Boys must be given credit for having uncovered many facts concerning chiastic structures in the Psalms, he failed to make the most of the principle with which he worked. He often observed terms and phrases which recur in a psalm, and rightly concluded that they had something to do with the literary structure of the psalm. He did not, however, subject each psalm to a minute analysis and made no attempt whatsoever to ascertain the principle of the Hebrew strophe. What he found of chiastic structures is, as the reader may suspect from the brief passages already presented, only a small part of what may be discovered in the Psalms by a minute analysis. The literary artistry of the Psalms is much more minute and intricate than Boys's method reveals.⁵⁷

In 1890 Bullinger enlarged and to some extent completed Boys's work on the psalms. In that year, he combined the printed works of Boys with the scattered notes written in the margin of Boys's Bible. Whereas the 1825 volume discussed only sixteen psalms, the 1890 edition contained illustrations from all the psalms and, according to Bullinger, was "the first time that such a [comprehensive] work had been laid [effectively] before the public."⁵⁸

Dissemination of Information about Jebb by Horne

Contrary to what I had previously thought, and as Michael Quinn has shown,⁵⁹ Thomas Hartwell Horne (1780–1862) adopted Jebb's basic terminology and presented a few of Jebb's examples of introverted parallelism in Horne's 1825 edition of his *Introduction to*

57. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 39.

58. Lund, "The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament," 105.

59. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. and enl. ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 500–501 n. 108. This work has been reviewed by John Gee, William J. Hamblin, and Rhett S. James in *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): 185–414; and by Douglas D. Alder in *Church History* 69/1 (March 2000): 225–26.

the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures.⁶⁰ In thinking that Horne had not done this until the 1836 edition, I followed the views of Bullinger and seemingly also of Lund. In his 1942 *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, Lund states that “Horne gives several pages to [the chiastic form] in later editions of his famous work,” citing the eleventh (1860) edition in contrast to the first edition of 1818.⁶¹ In writing my 1969 article on chiasmus, I followed Lund in this regard.⁶² During the ensuing research for my master’s thesis a few months later, however, I found that Jebb was in fact discussed in Horne’s seventh edition, published in 1836, which was in the BYU library, and thus my thesis states that Horne “had adopted the terminology and formulations of Jebb in 1836.”⁶³ Based on that new but still incomplete information, I removed the reference to Horne’s 1860 edition when the 1969 article was reprinted in 1982.⁶⁴ From Quinn’s work, I became aware of the date and contents of Horne’s fourth edition, published in 1825. The following description updates and corrects my previous statements in this regard. I regret that previous point of misinformation.

Horne’s encyclopedic two-volume work covers a vast array of topics about the Bible, ranging from its history, culture, and contents to the original languages, manuscripts, editions, versions, variants, quotations, poetry, interpretation, metaphors, figurative language, typologies, morals, and inferential or practical readings. He also produced a “Reader’s Digest” version or “compendium” of the longer treatise. Both works went through several editions, and they stood beside his many other early publications on bibliography (1808–1812,

60. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (Philadelphia: Littell, 1825).

61. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 25, emphasis added. On Bullinger, see the text accompanying note 58 above.

62. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” 73.

63. Welch, “A Study Relating Chiasmus,” 110.

64. John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Book of Mormon Authorship*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 38.

1814, 1827),⁶⁵ anti-Deism (1820),⁶⁶ anti-Catholicism (1827),⁶⁷ the authenticity of scripture (1828),⁶⁸ and parochial psalmody (1829).⁶⁹ He earned his M.A. from St. John's College, Cambridge, and served as Curate of the United Parishes of Christ Church, Newgate Street and Saint Leonard, Foster Lane.

The first edition of his main work, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, was published in 1818 in London by Cadell and Davies. This edition contains a discussion of Hebrew poetry,⁷⁰ based largely on the work of Lowth, who knew nothing of chiasmus, as has been pointed out above. A second 1821 edition and a third corrected 1822 edition of this work exist, but I have not been able to locate a copy of volume 2 of either of them, so I am unsure if they mentioned the 1820 work of Jebb in their section on Hebrew poetry.

A printing of the fourth corrected edition (and first American edition) of Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study* appeared in London and Philadelphia in 1825 (parenthetical page numbers in this and the next paragraph refer to this edition) and offers an enlarged section on Hebrew poetry,⁷¹ which contains several pages that mention Jebb on many points of parallelisms. This material

65. Thomas Hartwell Horne et al., *A Catalogue of the Harleian Manuscripts in the British Museum* (London: Eyre and Strahan, 1808–12); *An Introduction to the Study of Bibliography* (London: Cadell and Davies, 1814); *A Catalogue of the Library of the College of St. Margaret and St. Bernard, Commonly Called Queen's College, in the University of Cambridge* (London: Bentley, 1827).

66. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Deism Refuted* (Philadelphia: Littell & Henry, 1820).

67. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Romanism Contradictory to the Bible* (London: Cadell, 1827).

68. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Gnesiotes tes Palaias kai Kaines Diathekes* (Miletus: [American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions], 1828).

69. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *A Manual of Parochial Psalmody: Comprising Select Portions from the Old and New Versions of the Psalms, Together with Hymns, for the Principal Festivals etc. of the Church of England* (London: Cadell, 1829).

70. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* (London: Printed for Cadell, 1818), 2:101–14.

71. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study* (1825), 2:446–73.

appears in volume 2, toward the end of chapter 10, “On the Poetry of the Hebrews,” and under the subheading “Parallel Lines Introverted.” Horne notes that many of Lowth’s arguments “are successfully controverted by Bishop Jebb,” to whose book “the reader is necessarily referred, as the discussion of this very difficult question would extend this chapter to an inordinate length” (2:447). Jebb’s work receives high praise as being “elegant and instructive” (2:448) in showing especially that parallelism of all kinds “pervades the New Testament as well as the Old” (2:451). At the same time, Horne accepted one reviewer’s criticism of Jebb’s terminology, citing the review of *Sacred Literature* that had appeared the year of its publication in the *British Critic*,⁷² but he concurred with that reviewer’s approval of Jebb’s designation of introverted parallelism as a distinct class of parallelism (see 2:451 n. 1). Throughout most of this chapter, the emphasis is on Hebrew line structure and various types of poetry.

Four pages in this twenty-eight-page chapter introduce the basic idea of introverted parallelism (2:456–57, 466–68). Jebb’s definition, “from flanks to centre,” and three of his examples of “parallel lines introverted” are given (2:456–57), but the examples are not Jebb’s best; they are either unremarkably simple (Proverbs 23:15–16, a-b-b-a), somewhat unclear (Isaiah 27:12–13, a-b-c-c-b-a, whose elements are not transparently connected: in that day / in Jerusalem; trump sound / bow down), or unconvincing (Psalm 135:15–18, a-b-c-d-d-c-b-a, which is presented in two alternative formats), and the case is weakened or obscured by a poor job of typesetting. Jebb’s definition is quoted on page 456: “These are stanzas so constructed, that, whatever be the number of lines, the first line shall be parallel with the last; the second with the penultimate, or last but one; and so throughout, in an order that looks inward, or to borrow a military phrase, from flanks to center. This may be called *introverted parallelism*.” Later, on page 466, Horne quotes another definition offered by Jebb: “speaking first to the second of two subjects proposed; or if the subjects be more

72. *British Critic* 14 (1820): 585–86.

than two, resuming them precisely in the inverted order, speaking first to the last, and last to the first.” Two short confirming examples of chiasmus are given at the end of this chapter (2:467): one comes from Matthew 7:6 and the other is an unbalanced example from 2 Corinthians 2:15–16. At this point Horne concludes with very high praise for Jebb, commending his work to “every biblical student for its numerous beautiful and philological criticisms and elucidations of the New Testament” (2:468). An appendix at the end of this massive volume offers an extensive, annotated bibliography, listing numerous titles, among which is Jebb’s, which is called “admirable” in the 1825 edition (2:716).

A sixth edition of the *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* appeared in 1828, and the seventh in 1836. The section on Hebrew poetry was then entitled “On the Interpretation of the Poetical Parts of Scripture,” and although the type was reset, the text remained essentially the same as it had appeared in 1825. This material on Hebrew poetry appears in volume 2 on pages 419–46 in the sixth edition, and in volume 1, part 2, pages 373–82 of the seventh, which also features an impressively wide-ranging bibliography.

Although the writing of John Jebb figured into Horne’s 1825 and subsequent editions,⁷³ the works of Thomas Boys, published in 1824 and 1825, were apparently too obscure to be mentioned in that publication. Even in Horne’s discussion of the psalms in his 1836 edition, the concept of “structure” continues to refer only to “choral structure,”⁷⁴ so the work of Boys on the structure of the Psalms had evidently made no impression on Horne in this regard. In the 1836 edition, Boys appears only amid Horne’s massively comprehensive bibliography;⁷⁵ that annotated bibliography contains 2,133 titles on all aspects of biblical studies. Only nine of those titles are listed under

73. The text remained essentially unchanged thereafter; see, for example, the seventh edition, printed in Philadelphia in 1836, 1:373–82, and the unabridged edition of 1868, 2:446–73.

74. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study*, 2:245, 1836 edition.

75. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study*, 2:76 and 120, 1836 edition; note: numbering begins over again after page 490.

the topic of Hebrew poetry even in 1836 (three by Lowth and one each by Boys, Eichhorn, Herder, Jebb, Sarchi, and Vogel),⁷⁶ so finding Boys even then would be like looking for a needle in a haystack.

Horne's second work, *Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible*, is a condensed version of the *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*. I am still unsure when and where the compendium first appeared, but in May 2001, I saw in the Bodleian Library at Oxford University a second edition, published in London in 1827, and a third edition, which appeared in London in 1829; printings that I know of appeared in New York in 1833 and 1835. This work uses Psalm 84:5–7 as an example of how introverted parallelism clarifies a confessedly difficult passage⁷⁷ and mentions Jebb briefly, giving his basic definition and one example (Isaiah 27:12–13) from the larger study and concluding: "Until very recently, the poetical parallelism was supposed to be confined to the Books of the Old Testament: but Bishop Jebb has shown that this characteristic of Hebrew Poetry, also exists, to a considerable degree, in the New Testament."⁷⁸

Reviews of Jebb and Boys in the 1820s

Horne benefited in his evaluation of Jebb from a lengthy review of *Sacred Literature* that had appeared in England shortly after its publication. Jebb's claims, which had challenged the completeness and correctness of the received wisdom of the famous Bishop Lowth, were carefully and cautiously examined in a lengthy two-part review in the December and January issues of the *British Critic* in 1820–21.⁷⁹ The first installment was devoted entirely to presenting several prima facie arguments against Jebb's main thesis that parallelisms of four types are to be found in the Greek New Testament as

76. I thank Katy W. Pulham for her assistance in establishing this information.

77. Thomas Hartwell Horne, *Compendious Introduction to the Study of the Bible* (New York: Arthur, 1829), 145.

78. Horne, *Compendious Introduction* (1827), 191; (1829), 144; and (1833 and 1835), 110.

79. *British Critic* 14 (December 1820): 580–96; 15 (January 1821): 1–22; found in the Bodleian Library, Oxford; condition too poor to allow copying. I thank John B. Fowles

they are in the Hebrew Old Testament. The second installment was composed largely of displaying various evidences presented by Jebb, which ranged from New Testament quotations of assorted types of Old Testament parallelisms to New Testament compositions of original parallelisms. Finally, after admitting that he had been originally “prepossessed” against Jebb’s basic argument, the reviewer found “there are practical advantages to be derived from it, which are far too important to be passed over in a hasty manner” and praised Jebb for elucidating “the interpretative value of parallelism” in general,⁸⁰ an assessment that Horne would share.

Relatively little attention, however—only the last three pages—was given in this thirty-nine-page review to introverted parallelism or epanodos, even though the reviewer had initially found this innovative form to be “the most important of all the varieties of parallel lines . . . with regard to its interpretive value.”⁸¹ Near the end of the review of this “important volume,” the critic extolled Jebb as having “thrown more light than all the commentators, on the very obscure passage, Matt. xv. 3–6, by exhibiting it in the form of an introverted stanza.”⁸² However, he then cautioned,

The obvious danger to which this mode of interpretation is liable, is that it may be extended too far, and that opinions may be founded, or doctrines built upon a nicety of verbal collocation which is not immediately obvious, and far too subtle to admit of the deduction of such important inferences. Mr. Jebb, in general, applies his system [of parallelisms] cautiously, as well as acutely, but we think that in a few instances he has drawn some conclusions which his premises scarcely appear to warrant.⁸³

for taking notes on these reviews in March 2001, which I was able to read and confirm in May 2001. In 2002, Katy Pulham was able to obtain for me a copy of these difficult-to-find pages from the British Library.

80. *Ibid.*, 15 (1821): 14–15.

81. *Ibid.*, 14 (1820): 586.

82. *Ibid.*, 15 (1821): 19.

83. *Ibid.*

This criticism was leveled particularly at his chiasmic analyses of Matthew 11:17–19 and Acts 20:21, where his method of reasoning was found to be “so refined and recondite” and “too subtle, at least in the concluding remark, to answer any good purpose.”⁸⁴ Again, Horne’s 1825 *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures* would concur, however, with the positive prospect of this review in identifying introverted parallelism as a distinct class of parallelism.⁸⁵

The critical reviewers of the works of Boys, on the other hand, were much less receptive. They pointed out that Boys had focused too narrowly on the identification of inverted correspondences and thus lacked the broader base of support enjoyed by Jebb. In 1824 the *British Review* devoted seven pages to this topic, largely quoting passages and examples from Jebb, mainly with approval, and then turning attention for ten pages to *Tactica Sacra* and opining, “We are not yet prepared to go the whole length with Mr. Boys, or to persuade ourselves, that the apostles, having wound up their thread, as it were, to the middle of an epistle, had it constantly in view to unwind it again with exact retrogradation to the end of it.”⁸⁶ The reviewer described the newly asserted style of composition, when applied to entire books, as “a model so purely artificial” and requiring “painful constraint and a degree of artifice, destructive to all freedom of thought,” that he felt compelled to conclude, “we cannot bring ourselves to receive Mr. Boys’s statement with implicit confidence, except upon the most solid evidence.”⁸⁷ While admitting “that evidence of this kind has to a certain extent been brought forward,” and that the New Testament letters “certainly do bear traces of the introverted parallelism,”⁸⁸ the review ended by noting that “a case is made out, which deserves the attention of all,” that parallelism should now be

84. *Ibid.*, 15 (1821): 21.

85. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study* (1825), 451 n. 1.

86. *British Review* 22 (August 1824): 176–85, quotation on 178; Bodleian Library, condition poor; British Library, good condition, copy obtained.

87. *Ibid.*, 178–79.

88. *Ibid.*, 179.

viewed as a characteristic of Hebrew prose as well as poetry and by encouraging “every biblical student to examine this whole question,” for “the extent of benefit, which may arise from their researches, cannot now be estimated.”⁸⁹

In that same year, an eight-page report in the *Eclectic Review* likewise acknowledged the “curious and interesting” contents of *Tactica Sacra* and even granted to Boys “the reality of the arrangement which he contends for,” but seriously doubted its value: “What benefit, it may still be asked, is to be derived from the knowledge of the Author’s discoveries?”⁹⁰ Boys complained to the editors of this meager assessment of his work, but they held their ground; two years later the *Eclectic Review* commented similarly in their eight-page coverage of his *Key to the Book of Psalms*:

Allowing all that Mr. Boys may contend for in these respects, it may still be questionable, whether any other reason is to be assigned for the peculiarity, than the national character of the writers, or whether any purpose was contemplated, which might not have been answered by a different method. . . .

We concede to Mr. Boys all that he requires in respect to the existence of the arrangements for which he contends; and had he furnished us with evidence equally conclusive in support of the strong assertions which we find in his works, respecting the value and importance of his discoveries, we

89. *Ibid.*, 185. In its concluding paragraph, this review projects an overall cautious hope in using this novel approach: “It is clearly the object of both the writers [Jebb and Boys], whose works stand at the head of this article, rather to invite the consideration of impartial, judicious, and competent persons to a new and important subject, than to gain proselytes to a system. They have brought a new light to the page of revelation, the existence of which was unsuspected before; and they have also by means of it detected many latent beauties, and rescued some difficult passages from the obscurity, which involved them. . . . A steady and sober use of the hints, which they have afforded, may possibly lead to results, on which even they have not calculated.” *Ibid.*

90. *Eclectic Review* 22 (1824): 359–66, quotations on 365; found in the Bodleian Library, good condition, copy obtained.

should as readily concede to him in this particular. But we find no such evidence.⁹¹

Thus, it comes as no surprise that in his annotated bibliography in 1836, Horne gave Boys faint praise, calling his efforts “an ingenious attempt”⁹² and citing this last reviewer only as “not [feeling] at liberty to award to Mr. Boys’s labours the full measure of value which he claims for them.”⁹³ Obviously, the idea of chiasmus, epanodos, introverted parallelism, or correspondence was not warmly embraced by all scholars, as Forbes would lament and try to correct a few years later.

The Promotion of Chiasmus by Forbes and Others

In spite of (and perhaps because of) the publicity given to Jebb by Horne and the caution or criticism given to Jebb and Boys in the reviews that appeared in the *British Critic*, the *British Review*, and the *Eclectic Review*, the volumes of Jebb and Boys themselves seem to have remained obscure, especially in America. From the evidence now available, one may surmise they were not widely circulated,⁹⁴ and where these books were available, their interest in symmetrical structures seems to have met with opposition or indifference. The situation was such that in 1854, John Forbes, a Scottish theologian, wrote a book with the stated purpose “to attempt to rescue the study of parallelism from the disrepute into which it has fallen.”⁹⁵ One

91. *Eclectic Review* 26 (1826): 17–25, quotations on 18–19, 24; found in the Bodleian Library, good condition, copy obtained.

92. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study* (1836 ed.), bibliography, 2:76, quoting the review of *Tactica Sacra* in *British Review*; see notes 86–89 above.

93. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study* (1836 ed.), bibliography, 2:120, quoting the review of *Key to the Book of Psalms* in the *Eclectic Review*, n. s., 26:25 (= 24 [1826]).

94. Lund, “The Presence of Chiasmus in the Old Testament,” 105. Jebb was better received at first, but today the world still knows virtually nothing about Boys; copies of his *Tactica Sacra* and his *Key to the Book of Psalms* seem to be very rare or nonexistent in the United States, as discussed on page 77 below. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 38, states that the first of these “seems to be entirely unknown in America.”

95. John Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1854), 3. He also asserts that “the importance of the study of parallelism . . . [has] been hitherto but very inadequately apprehended” (*ibid.*, 2).

of the more outspoken critics of the study of parallelisms was an American professor, Joseph Addison Alexander. Alexander accused the study of rarely, if ever, having “been the means of eliciting any new sense in Scripture not known before” and strongly protested against what he called “the fantastic and injurious mode of printing most translations of Isaiah, since the days of Lowth.”⁹⁶ Forbes’s volume undertook to answer these objections and to promote the study of parallelism.

Forbes’s *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture* is an extensive, definitive restatement and reinforcement of the arguments for the presence of parallelisms in the Old and New Testaments. Although only 9 of its 345 pages deal with introverted parallelisms and epanodos, this short section is compact. Forbes not only quotes examples from Boys and Jebb, but he improves on them. For example, Jebb had arranged Matthew 6:24 as

No man can serve two masters:
 Either he will hate the one and love the other,
 Or he will adhere to the one and neglect the other;
 Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.

Forbes carried the introverted parallelism in this passage even further by exposing the epanodos in the two central lines:

No man can serve two masters:
 For either he will hate the one
 And love the other
 Or he will adhere to the one
 And neglect the other;
 Ye cannot serve God and Mammon.⁹⁷

Forbes also quotes eight examples from Boys, the most complicated of which is Boys’s analysis of structure in Paul’s Epistle to

96. From Joseph A. Alexander’s *Commentary on the Prophecies of Isaiah* (Glasgow edition), 11, quoted in Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*, 2.

97. Forbes, *Symmetrical Structure of Scripture*, 42.

Philemon.⁹⁸ Forbes considers Jebb's revisions and criticisms of Lowth fitting, and he uses the composite knowledge of Lowth and Jebb to analyze a great number of passages in the New Testament, paying special attention (as had Jebb) to the Sermon on the Mount. Forbes's book is significant, if not as the cause of the academic acceptance of the principles of introverted parallelism, at least as a reflection of the fact, signaled by its title, that the study of symmetrical structure finally received attention in the mid-nineteenth century.⁹⁹

Since the time of Forbes, several biblical studies that reflect similar interests have appeared. Some of them seem well informed about their predecessors; others do not. On the one hand, William Milligan's 1892 book, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*,¹⁰⁰ makes contributions of its own about chiasmus but never refers directly to any predecessors. On the other hand, Bullinger's 1898 treatise, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible*,¹⁰¹ offers many fine examples of chiasmus, summarizing and adding in considerable detail to the works of Jebb,¹⁰² Boys,¹⁰³ and Bengel.¹⁰⁴ He brings clarity, especially to the display of complex correspondences.¹⁰⁵ George B. Gray's 1915 *Forms of Hebrew Poetry*,¹⁰⁶ though it builds on Lowth's *Lectures* and displays interest in various rhythmic configurations of parallelism, does not reveal any knowledge of Jebb, Boys, or Forbes. Only in 1942, with the publication by the University of North Carolina Press of Nils W. Lund's *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, did information about the initial work on chias-

98. Ibid., 37–40; Boys, *Tactica Sacra*, 61–68.

99. Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, viii.

100. William Milligan, *Lectures on the Apocalypse*, 3rd ed. (London: Murray, 1892), cited in Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 39.

101. E. W. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech Used in the Bible* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1898). Bullinger's influence on Oxford's *Companion Bible* is noted by Lund, *Chiasmus in the New Testament*, 40, who is grateful that "it embodies a sound literary principle which has waited too long for recognition."

102. Bullinger, *Figures of Speech*, 349, 358–62.

103. Ibid., 363, 379.

104. Ibid., 374.

105. Ibid., 379–93.

106. George B. Gray, *The Forms of Hebrew Poetry* (London: Hodder & Stroughton, 1915).

mus in the early nineteenth century finally become generally accessible in the twentieth century.

Joseph Smith and the Emergence of Chiasmus

Returning now to the questions posed at the outset, What can we know about the possibility of Joseph Smith's awareness of chiasmus in the 1820s? Obviously, in light of this recent research, I wish I had found or learned of Horne's 1825 edition earlier, and I wish that I could modify certain parts of my previous statements,¹⁰⁷ as I would hope everyone would always do as more information becomes available. In light of what I now know, I would qualify or clarify my position simply to assert a *very low probability* that Joseph Smith knew anything about chiasmus in 1829, being careful not to imply, claim, or suggest complete ignorance of this literary form in America at that time. More than Lund believed and more than I realized, Jebb's work received greater and earlier attention, especially in the 1825

107. Thus, in 1969 I wrote, "Even though all knowledge of this form lay dormant for centuries, it was rediscovered in the nineteenth century when formal criticism became popular. But by that time the Book of Mormon had long been in print." Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," 84. Although it is true that form criticism did not become popular until after 1830, one should not understand that chiasmus was completely unknown at that time, as my reference to Jebb's *Sacred Literature* in note 3 in my 1969 article recognizes.

In 1978 I wrote, "No one seriously contends that Joseph Smith or anyone associated with him knew or could have known of chiasmus or had the training to discover this principle for himself. The evidence is overwhelming against such a claim." Welch, "Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon," in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 208; restated in 1997 in "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, 219. Today, I acknowledge that people in Joseph Smith's environs 1829 *could* have known of chiasmus, but I still doubt that Joseph Smith actually did.

While it remains true that the works of Jebb and Boys were not "published in the United States," and while one still "cannot assume that Joseph Smith would have had access to any of [these] British books," as I stated in "What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?" 217–18, it should be clarified that he might have had access to Horne's 1825 treatise. It is also evident that information was available in the 1820s on various forms of parallelism in the Hebrew Bible, but this has never been an issue. I have not wanted to overstate or understate the case on behalf of Joseph Smith, but I see how such statements clearly could unwittingly be misunderstood. Others have made similar statements also without, I am confident, any intent to misrepresent.

Philadelphia edition of Horne's impressive volumes introducing the critical study of the Bible.

Still, for many reasons I do not think that these new developments significantly change the conclusion concerning Joseph Smith's actual knowledge of chiasmus or concerning its presence in the Book of Mormon. Although further information may yet come forth to change this view (and I welcome any other information that may come to light), I do not believe that Joseph Smith knew anything about chiasmus from these publications, even though it is remotely possible that he could have. While one cannot be sure on such matters, and more work probably remains to be done on this topic, I know of no evidence that the 1820, 1824, or 1825 works of Jebb or Boys themselves reached America, let alone Palmyra or Harmony, in the 1820s; and no copy of Horne was found on the book lists of the Manchester library, which contained very few religious books of any kind (only 8 of its 421 titles were religious).¹⁰⁸ I do not know how many copies of the 1825 edition of Horne were printed in Philadelphia. Judging by the large size of this work and the frequency with which it was reprinted, individual print runs may have been fairly modest in size.

My research assistants have contacted, where convenient, most of the libraries that hold any of these titles to see if they know when they acquired them. The preliminary results support the idea that very few, if any, copies of Jebb or Boys actually reached America before 1829. If anyone in the vicinity of any such libraries as Princeton, Dartmouth, Yale, Brown, Andover, William and Mary, Virginia, or Pennsylvania wishes to stop in to see if any more can be learned about their possible holdings of any of these works, any further information along these lines would be welcomed.

Regarding Jebb's *Sacred Literature*, Jed Woodworth, a student, found that the bookplate in the copy held in the Hollis Library dates its acquisition there to 1910. I thank Lance Starr for learning that the

108. For a complete listing of the titles in this library at the time, see Robert Paul, "Joseph Smith and the Manchester (New York) Library," *BYU Studies* 22/3 (1982): 343–56. Joseph moved to Harmony in 1827.

Columbia College Library holds a copy that bears the inscription, “To the library of Columbia College, New York, part of the legacy of the late Rt Rev John Jebb, DD, Bishop of Limerick, Ireland” (apparently Jebb still had copies at his death and bequeathed some of them to libraries); because the bookplate shows an address that was not used before 1849, one may conclude that Columbia obtained its copy after 1849; it was catalogued in 1885. Emory University holds a copy of the 1820 and 1831 editions of Jebb, the later of which could not have been in the country before 1831. The New York Public Library has unsuccessfully searched for evidence of when it acquired this title.

Concerning Boys’s *Tactica Sacra*, one copy has been located at Dallas Theological Seminary, established in 1924. No accession information is available. The book is not listed at Harvard or the New York Public Library.

Harvard and Yale each hold a copy of Boys’s 1825 edition of *Key to the Book of Psalms*, but no acquisition date is apparently indicated. The Jewish Theological Seminary of America has a copy of that edition that was acquired on 9 June 1918 for 2 shillings and 6 pence—evidently it was purchased in England near the end of World War I. This title is more common in libraries because it was reprinted in 1890 by Bullinger.

Only the 1805–1807 volumes of the *Eclectic Review* were listed in the Brown University catalogue as of 1843. Dartmouth holds the *British Critic* and the *British Review*, but only on microfilm. The University of Pennsylvania holds copies of all three, but, as is typical, without physically checking the shelves it cannot be determined which volumes are in that collection or when they were acquired.

Both the bookplate and verso of the title page of Horne’s 1825 treatise say that Harvard acquired its copy of that work in 1860. Nevertheless, Horne’s treatise would have been available for purchase in bookshops or from traveling salesmen, and such merchants would have been the most likely sources for Joseph Smith to have obtained a fledgling knowledge of the five examples and a few pages about introverted parallelism buried in those two massive tomes.

Interestingly, Joseph Smith did possess a copy of the second half of the 1825 edition of Horne's *Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Scriptures*. This volume is owned today by the Community of Christ (formerly Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) and is stored in its historical archives in Independence, Missouri. In fair to poor condition, it has a linen binding; a bookplate shows that it was passed down through Frederick Madison Smith. Written on the right front endpaper (but not in Joseph Smith's handwriting) are the words "Joseph Smith Jun. Kirtland O. Jan. 1834" and on the left endpaper (partially under the bookplate) are the words "J. D. Hughes. Magadore. Summit Co. Ohio," apparently indicating the name of the previous owner from whom Joseph Smith acquired the book on that date. We therefore know that Joseph Smith obtained his copy of Horne's book four and one-half years after the translation of the Book of Mormon had been finished.

Moreover, there is no evidence on any page that this copy of this book was ever read by anyone. The book is completely clean: there are no notes, no marginalia, no smudge marks, and no creased pages.¹⁰⁹ It would appear that Joseph did not study this kind of reference material. Horne's work is massively intimidating. In four substantial volumes bound in two, it mentions virtually everything in the then-known world of biblical scholarship. Merely locating the discussion of chiasmus, epanodos, or introverted parallelism in this vast array is difficult, even when one knows what to look for. One finds it in the index only under "Parallelism, introverted."

And even if Joseph Smith had read Horne or Jebb, he still would have known little about structural chiasmus. In Jebb's work, epanodos, or introverted parallelism, played mainly a supporting role in the overall argument for which he was best known—namely, for extending the study of parallelism in Hebrew lines from the Old Testament to the New. From Horne's volume, Joseph Smith would have had available only a brief discussion of Jebb's work on "parallel lines

109. I am grateful to Ron Romig, church archivist of the Community of Christ, for allowing me to inspect this volume in September 2000.

introverted,” illustrated by three examples from the Old Testament, and two short examples from the New Testament ten pages later. All of this was tucked into twenty-eight pages on the characteristics of Hebrew lines, with one reference to Jebb in the bibliography. In addition, the tabular arrangements of Boys (none of which was mentioned in 1825 by Horne) are technical and in most cases hard to follow. Even in later editions, Horne’s summaries of the scholarship on each of the four New Testament epistles analyzed in *Tactica Sacra* completely ignore Boys.

Furthermore, one may well ask, if Joseph Smith had known of these works, would he have followed them? The ideas of Jebb and Boys were bold, new ideas, and as discussed above, the reviewers were critical, especially of the conclusions drawn by Boys. Could people in the 1820s have been confident that these notions would withstand the test of time?¹¹⁰

In addition, even if Joseph had dared to follow the lead of Jebb and Boys, he would have been misguided by their rule that these structures placed “in the centre the *less* important notion.”¹¹¹ Chiasms in the Book of Mormon typically do the opposite. And he might well have hesitated to use chiasmus in prose and not merely in poetry, where all varieties of parallelism were more acceptably located.

The idea of Joseph’s ferreting out a knowledge of chiasmus from the Bible on his own initiative also seems unlikely. Of course, he knew the Bible, but many original word orders get straightened around when the Hebrew or Greek is translated into English, as Jebb often complained. But even in the original language, the inverted patterns are not obvious to unattuned readers. My experience in demonstrating the strong chiasm in Leviticus 24:13–23 to the Jewish Law Association in Boston in 1988 shows that obvious chiastic structures do not jump out at erudite readers, even though they might have read the Hebrew text

110. I have emphasized this point in a videotaped lecture, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” produced by FARMS in 1994, transcript WEL-T1, p. 18.

111. Horne, *Introduction to the Critical Study* (1825), 2:467, emphasis added.

many times.¹¹² Thus, the likelihood that Joseph Smith could have discovered this principle for himself or ever actually knew anything about chiasmus in 1829 remains very small.

And finally, even assuming that Joseph Smith had known of chiasmus, the following observation, which I made in 1981, still stands: “There would still have remained the formidable task of composing the well-balanced, meaningful chiastic structures . . . which are found in precisely those portions of the Book of Mormon in which one would logically and historically expect to find them.”¹¹³ To me the complexity of Alma 36 seems evidence enough of this point.¹¹⁴ Imagine the young prophet, without notes, dictating “extensive texts in this style that was unnatural to his world, while at the same time keeping numerous other strands, threads, and concepts flowing without confusion in his dictation.”¹¹⁵

In 1970 I ended my master’s thesis on a note of caution: “Since it is precarious to be overly positivistic in ancient studies when the obscure origins of literary ideas are under discussion, this thesis has avoided making a vast number of subjective judgments.”¹¹⁶ I still wish to do the same today. Caution is always advisable in speaking on such topics, in spite of and in light of all we know and do not know.

112. Welch, “What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?” 218–19.

113. Welch, “Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon,” in *Chiasmus in Antiquity*, 208.

114. John W. Welch, “A Masterpiece: Alma 36,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 114–31; John W. Welch, “Chiasmus in Alma 36” (FARMS, 1989), 45 pp. See also the statistical analysis in Edwards and Edwards, “Did Chiasms Appear in the Book of Mormon by Chance?”

115. Welch, “What Does Chiasmus in the Book of Mormon Prove?” 218.

116. Welch, “A Study Relating Chiasmus,” 155.

ONE SIDE OF A NONEXISTENT CONVERSATION

John Gee

As new research comes out on a subject, it is useful to have an occasional summary of the state of affairs. Two recent attempts have been made to summarize the state of research on the Book of Abraham: one from the anti-Mormon perspective and the other—the book under review—from a Latter-day Saint perspective. Unfortunately, both were already seriously out-of-date when they appeared.¹ Though the work under consideration has certain merits, it also contains a number of errors.

Talking Past Each Other

Thomas Cottle, an amateur enthusiast who once served in a temple presidency, approaches the Book of Abraham from the perspective of a believer. He is vaguely aware that the Book of Abraham is controversial

1. The other summary, besides the book under review, is Robert K. Ritner, “The ‘Breathing Permit of Hôr’: Thirty-Four Years Later,” *Dialogue* 33/4 (2000): 97–119, which appeared in spring 2002. As inadequate as the following work may be, the best summary to date is probably John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000).

Review of Thomas D. Cottle. *The Papyri of Abraham: Facsimiles of the Everlasting Covenant*. Portland, Ore.: Insight, 2002. xv + 229 pp. \$14.95.

but gives the controversy no heed. He claims that “the leading scholar in substantiating Abraham and his works was Hugh W. Nibley, with other contributors being Michael Dennis Rhodes, H. Donl Peterson, Michael Lyon, Jay M. Todd, and John Gee, to name a few. Their contributions on the Book of Abraham and facsimiles have quieted all serious opposition to this theological work” (p. xiv). Would that that were so!

Cottle’s naiveté on this point touches on a more important point in Book of Abraham studies. Latter-day Saints do not generally pay any attention to what outsiders or critics may say about the Book of Abraham. On the other hand, we should not imagine that anti-Mormons² bother to read what members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints have to say about any of their own scriptures, especially the Book of Abraham. There is simply no conversation taking place on the subject of the Book of Abraham. The two sides, if we can call them that, are not talking to each other; they are talking to themselves.

There is nothing wrong with the various sides talking to themselves so long as they do not pretend to be engaged in dialogue. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ in general have no pretensions about holding any dialogue with critics. They simply do not, for the most part, care what their critics say. Seeing themselves in a position similar to that of Nehemiah, they generally respond by “saying, I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down: why should the work cease, whilst I leave it, and come down to you?” (Nehemiah 6:3). They want to understand their scripture and, while they appreciate the insights that scholars have to offer, they think that prophets, rather than scholars, are the final interpreters of prophetic scripture. Anti-Mormons, on the other hand, make a pretense of addressing the Saints, even though they are largely engaged in propaganda for the purpose of boundary

2. While a few of the authors mentioned in this list might choose to describe their activities otherwise, they are “anti-Mormon” because they fight against the Church of Jesus Christ, which is the root meaning of the term. In the nineteenth century, those who fought against the Church of Jesus Christ designated themselves “anti-Mormon,” and I see no reason not to apply the same term to their followers who are engaged, although sometimes more politely, in the same activity.

maintenance. Because anti-Mormons are not genuinely interested in dialogue, they do not bother to state the position of members of the Church of Jesus Christ with accuracy; in some cases, anti-Mormon caricatures of that position are not even recognizable.

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ are mostly interested in the content of the Book of Abraham. Anti-Mormons are dismissive of its content and concentrate on its production, a subject to which most Latter-day Saints are indifferent; they do not care what besides revelation is involved. Suppose for a moment that some people disagreed with Francis L. Griffith's translation of Papyrus Rylands IX and, furthermore, argued that his translation was completely bogus. Suppose further that in their efforts to demonstrate that it was a fraud they scoured Griffith's notebooks, as well as those of his student, Alan Gardiner, but they neglected to examine Griffith's translation. As strange as this approach sounds, it is the typical anti-Mormon approach to the Book of Abraham. This also illustrates why members of the Church of Jesus Christ and anti-Mormons are not engaged in any authentic sort of dialogue; they simply talk past each other.

Merits . . .

In keeping with the typical position of members of the Church of Jesus Christ, in his book Cottle tells the story of Abraham and then proceeds with a commentary on the facsimiles. He weaves his narrative from the Book of Abraham and from biblical and a few extrabiblical sources, which include (in chronological order): The *Genesis Apocryphon*, the book of *Jubilees*, writings of Flavius Josephus, and the *Book of Jasher*. Before the publication of Cottle's book, however, a work came out containing over thirty times this number of noncanonical accounts that Cottle could have taken into consideration.³ The increase in the number of known traditions about Abraham raises the question of why Cottle should privilege the late *Book of Jasher* over other, earlier accounts.

3. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001).

Cottle's commentary on the facsimiles simply uses them as a springboard to talk about various tangential topics. It is not an Egyptological commentary, nor even an Egyptologically informed commentary, on the subject, although there is nothing particularly objectionable about the doctrinal content. Since he is writing for Latter-day Saints, there can be no objection to that part of his commentary; it is only when he makes pretenses of an Egyptologically informed commentary that his display of specious learning causes problems. Cottle hopes that because of his commentary "individuals will no longer respond to the facsimiles like a statement made by Shakespeare. 'I cannot too much muse such shapes, such gesture, and such sound expression, a kind of excellent dumb discourse.'" (p. xv).⁴ I fear that his commentary does not fulfill his objectives, but, ironically, his Shakespearean quotation becomes self-descriptive.

... And Demerits

As with most self-published efforts, Cottle's work contains a number of errors, some of which are minor and others of which significantly detract from his work. The most serious problem is his use of images without permission, including all of appendix C. Even when he does include a permission statement, it is invariably not from the entity that owns the copyright. This is, unfortunately, a common problem with publications on the Book of Abraham, including most anti-Mormon publications.

Examples of other errors include:

"Ldy" for "Lady" (p. 173)

"Ta-khred-Khonsu" for Senchons (*t3-šr.t-ḥnsw*, Σενχωνϣ)⁵ (p. 173)

"Wst-wrt" for Esoeris (*is.t-wr.t*, Εσοηρις)⁶ (p. 175)

4. The quotation is from William Shakespeare, *The Tempest* 3.3.38–39.

5. Erich Lüddeckens et al., *Demotisches Namenbuch* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 1980–2000), 15:1144.

6. *Ibid.*, 2:76.

Authors' names are often deleted (pp. 195, 200, 204, 207–8, 217, 222). John Gee is changed into "John A. Gee" (p. 191) and also into Stephen Ricks (pp. 191, 227).

Some errors are less obvious: "Where Abram lived exactly is not known. It was possibly the great cultural center of Tanis, the capitol of Egypt for 350 years, but to date, the location of this city has not been found" (p. 14). Actually, Tanis (San el-Hagar) has been under excavation since the end of the nineteenth century and during World War II yielded spectacular finds of undisturbed royal burials rivaling or surpassing those of King Tutankhamun.⁷ Tanis was a royal city for an extended period, but that period began about the time of Saul, long after the days of Abraham.

Final Note

Insofar as one can overlook historical and philological inaccuracies in a commentary on the facsimiles and the author's uses of the facsimiles as a springboard for homiletics, one might find this book useful. If one is looking for something else, one should look elsewhere.

7. For overviews, see Geoffrey Graham, "Tanis," in *The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Egypt* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 3:348–50; and Ian Shaw and Paul Nicholson, *The Dictionary of Ancient Egypt* (New York: Abrams, 1995), 282–83. Excavation reports include W. M. Flinders Petrie, *Tanis* (London: Trübner, 1885–88); Pierre Montet, *Les nouvelles fouilles de Tanis* (Paris: Les belles lettres, 1933); Pierre Montet, *La nécropole royale de Tanis* (Paris: n.p., 1947–60); Pierre Montet, *Le lac sacré de Tanis* (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1966); Georges Goyon, *La découverte des trésors de Tanis* (Paris: Perséa, 1987); Philippe Brissaud, comp., *Cahiers de Tanis* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les civilisations, 1987). For reused monuments at Tanis, see Eric P. Uphill, *The Temples of Per Ramesses* (Warminster: Aris & Phillips, 1984), 8–95, 129–52.

NIBLEY'S *ABRAHAM IN EGYPT*:
LAYING THE FOUNDATION FOR
ABRAHAM RESEARCH

Brian M. Hauglid

Hugh Nibley is likely one of the most widely read Latter-day Saint scholars and has been so for over forty years. His academic studies of the Book of Mormon were groundbreaking, and his social essays have been, for me, inspirational and, in many cases, convicting. When I read Nibley it quickly becomes apparent that he is not only a brilliant scholar but also a committed disciple of Jesus Christ. His consistent blending of faith and reason bolsters my respect for him and my confidence in what he says. Nibley's writings exemplify Peter's counsel to "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear [i.e., reverence]" (1 Peter 3:15).

The new edition of *Abraham in Egypt* (volume 14 in the Collected Works of Hugh Nibley) published conjointly by Deseret Book and the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) is a fine example of Nibley's command of languages, literature, and history. He lays the foundation for various aspects of Abraham research, such as responding to the Book of Abraham critics, examining parallels

Review of Hugh Nibley. *Abraham in Egypt*, ed. Gary P. Gillum and illustrations directed by Michael P. Lyon, 2nd ed. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000. xxxiii + 705 pp., with scripture and subject indexes. \$34.95.

between the Book of Abraham and ancient texts, and analyzing connections of Book of Abraham materials with Egyptian religion and culture. Of course Latter-day Saints will be pleased because Nibley never forgets who his audience is and seeks to bring all his research under the umbrella of the gospel.

This new edition is superior in several ways to the 1981 edition published by Deseret Book. These improvements were made under the supervision of Gary Gillum and staff members at FARMS. Added to this second edition are several chapters from Nibley's series *A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price*, which originally appeared in the *Improvement Era* from 1968 to 1970. A few of these added chapters are, however, placed anachronistically in the book. For instance, chapter 4, "Setting the Stage—The World of Abraham," was written twelve years before chapter 2, "Joseph Smith and the Sources." Still, because these chapters do not generally address the same subject I think their placement makes the book well rounded and adds to its overall purpose. Some of my favorite articles from the *New Look at the Pearl of Great Price* series found in this new edition include "Setting the Stage—The World of Abraham" and "The Sacrifice of Sarah," as well as Nibley's delightful and at times humorous "Joseph Smith and the Sources" and "Joseph Smith and the Critics," both of which take to task some of the earlier critics of the Pearl of Great Price.

Endnotes in each chapter of this new edition have been source checked and updated, and if a particular source could not be found or Nibley's assertion could not be verified, such is mentioned in the endnotes (see, for example, pp. 546–53 nn. 170, 259, 371). Only a few instances occur where sources are not directly referenced in the endnotes.¹

Excellent editing of a volume of over seven hundred pages with literally hundreds of endnotes is nothing short of miraculous, and the typesetting and layout of this book look almost impeccable. I found only one misspelled name that was likely transmitted from the earlier edition. On pages 300 and 301 (see p. 110 in 1981 edition)

1. See, for example, the two quotations from the chapter "The Rivals" (pp. 226–27) that are not directly referenced in endnotes 33 and 34 (p. 250).

Eupolemus is misspelled *Eumolpus*. As far as I know no such person named Eumolpus exists.

Among the impressive features of this edition are the numerous illustrations accompanying the narrative and rituals; some are drawn by the talented Michael Lyon, and others are computer-enhanced. In addition, the volume contains maps, charts, and helpful indexes. Even though Nibley did not update the research in this volume, these changes and improvements have, I think, justified a second edition to this classic work.

However, Latter-day Saints should not look at this book as the final word on Abraham research. Much is happening among Latter-day Saint scholars that either builds on Nibley's previous foundational work or is opening new areas of research to increase our understanding of the Book of Abraham. For the past several years FARMS has sponsored the Studies in the Book of Abraham project. This project opens a venue for Latter-day Saint scholars to publish their research on various aspects of the Book of Abraham. Two volumes of the Studies in the Book of Abraham series have recently been published.² I believe the first volume, *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*, updates Nibley's previous research by comparing Abraham traditions from Jewish, Christian, and Islamic texts with the Book of Abraham. While Nibley provides a stimulating comparison and analysis of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and the *Testament of Abraham* in the chapter "The Book of Abraham and the Book of the Dead," the *Traditions* book builds on Nibley's previous work by not only presenting these two traditions but also offering over one hundred others that have specific relevance to the Book of Abraham. Some of these traditions appear for the first time.³ In addition, the 1999 Book of Abraham

2. John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds., *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001); and Michael D. Rhodes, *The Holy Book of Breathing: A Translation and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002). An additional aid in Abraham studies is John Gee, *A Guide to the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000).

3. Ishaq Ibn Bishr (d. 821), for example, was not available to Nibley and is published for the first time in both English and Arabic. Cf. Tvedtnes, Hauglid, and Gee, *Traditions*, 310–26, 515–19.

conference “Astronomy, Papyri, and Covenant” and the 2001 conference “The World of Abraham” sponsored by FARMS both updated and presented new materials on Abraham research.

Still, *Abraham in Egypt* is a provocative foray into the heart of the Book of Abraham. From Nibley we gain a much better appreciation for its setting in antiquity and the veracity of its characters and events. Using a comparative approach, Nibley demonstrates that the Book of Abraham contains a number of themes—such as idolatry, child sacrifice, the threat to Abraham’s life, and astronomy—not found in the Old Testament and finds “striking parallels in the apocryphal Abraham literature” (p. 648).

In his discussions of the Book of Abraham, Nibley not only takes us deep into the Egyptian world of Pharaoh’s court but also analyzes Egyptian connections to Ham, Egyptus, and the Egyptian skill of bee-keeping. Nibley concludes that the Book of Abraham has propelled Latter-day Saint understanding of Abraham well beyond the scholarship of his day.

My colleague Daniel C. Peterson likens Nibley to an eager and curious antique collector who discovers a home filled with antique collectibles in every room. With youthful excitement he rushes from room to room jotting down notes with each new find. One room may require a knowledge of Egyptian, another Hebrew or Arabic, and yet another Greek, German, or French. Nibley’s research on the Book of Abraham has laid a foundation in each of these areas. However, successive scholars must now painstakingly plod through each of these rooms and make necessary revisions, corrections, or updates. Thanks to pioneering works such as *Abraham in Egypt*, Abraham research today stands on a much firmer foundation.

A POWERFUL NEW RESOURCE FOR STUDYING THE BOOK OF ABRAHAM

E. Douglas Clark

John Tvedtnes, Brian Hauglid, and John Gee, compilers and editors of *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*, deserve deep gratitude from every Latter-day Saint who loves Abraham and loves studying his life. This big, beautifully bound volume constitutes a veritable treasure trove of Abrahamic lore and legend preserved in a wide variety of texts from early Jewish, Christian, Islamic, and other sources—enough to keep us busy comparing and contemplating for quite some time.

Why such material is or should be of interest to Latter-day Saints is well explained by the authors in a thoughtful introduction in which they demonstrate that, beginning with the Prophet Joseph Smith himself shortly after the publication of the Book of Abraham, early church leaders open-mindedly examined the few additional ancient texts available to them for possible further information about Abraham, the one whose covenant they were conscious of fulfilling and whose example they were commanded to follow. “Do the works of Abraham,”

Review of John A. Tvedtnes, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, comps. and eds. *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001. xxxviii + 565 pp., with appendixes and indexes. \$49.95.

the Lord commanded the church through Joseph Smith (D&C 132:32; see 101:4–5).

This imperative continues, as President Spencer W. Kimball reminded the Saints in his First Presidency message entitled “The Example of Abraham.”¹ That example shines forth with pristine splendor, of course, in the Book of Abraham itself, a straightforward historical record that marks the path to perfection by showing Abraham “strictly obeying all God’s commandments (see Abraham 3:25); diligently seeking righteousness and peace (see Abraham 1:2); making and keeping sacred covenants (see Abraham 2:6–13); receiving the priesthood and sacred ordinances (see Abraham 1:2 and Facsimile 2); building a family unit (Abraham 2:2); searching the scriptures (see Abraham 1:31); keeping journals and records (see Abraham 1:31); sharing the gospel (see Abraham 2:15); and proving faithful in the face of opposition (see Abraham 1:5–15 and Facsimile 1).”²

The Book of Abraham further contains revelations to the patriarch of the panorama of humanity’s origin and destiny, including the *raison d’être* of mortal existence. From our premortal beginnings in God’s presence, we are sent into mortality to be “prove[n] . . . to see if [we] will do all things whatsoever the Lord [our] God shall command [us]” (Abraham 3:25) so that we can “have glory added upon [our] heads for ever and ever” (Abraham 3:26). Parley Pratt noted that in Abraham’s record “we see . . . unfolded our eternal being—our existence before the world was—our high and responsible station in the councils of the Holy One, and our eternal destiny.”³

No wonder Wilford Woodruff felt so privileged to assist in the coming forth of this ancient record, as he expressed when he helped set the type for its maiden publication: “The truths of the Book of Abraham are truly edifying great & glorious which are among the

1. Spencer W. Kimball, “The Example of Abraham,” *Ensign*, June 1975, 2–7.

2. E. Douglas Clark, foreword to Hugh Nibley, *Abraham in Egypt*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 2000), xxi.

3. Parley P. Pratt, “Editorial Remarks,” *Millennial Star* 3 (1 August 1842): 70.

rich treasures that are revealed unto us in the last days,”⁴ causing “our hearts to burn within us while we behold their glorious truths opened unto us.”⁵

With this knowledge that authentic Abrahamic traditions had survived outside the corpus of the biblical text, Wilford Woodruff was naturally open to considering other Abrahamic lore in sources like the *Book of Jasher*, one of the few ancient nonbiblical texts then available. In a public sermon to the Saints in 1865, he referred to an Abrahamic tradition from *Jasher*.⁶ Wilford was familiar, of course, with the revelation to Joseph Smith about the authenticity of noncanonical Bible-related texts, a revelation declaring the Apocrypha to contain a mixture of both truth and fiction capable of being accurately sifted only through the help of the Spirit (see D&C 91:1–6). That Wilford Woodruff—a spiritual giant if there ever was one—would preach about an Abrahamic legend in the noncanonical *Book of Jasher* should tell us something.

Since Wilford Woodruff’s day a remarkable thing has happened. Other ancient Bible-related texts, once widely circulated but for many centuries forgotten, have come forth in great numbers from caves, graves, archives, libraries, and monasteries around the world. The emergence of such texts has amazed scholars like Samuel Sandmel, who declared in one of the forewords to the massive two-volume set of Old Testament pseudepigrapha published in the 1980s: “By the strangest quirk of fate respecting literature that I know of, large numbers of writings by Jews were completely lost from the transmitted Jewish heritage. . . . Now . . . a door is being opened anew to treasures that are very old.”⁷ These texts are part of what Hugh Nibley has referred to as that “astonishing outpouring

4. Scott G. Kenney, ed., *Wilford Woodruff’s Journal: 1833–1898 Typescript* (Midvale, Utah: Signature Books, 1983), 2:159, 19 March 1842.

5. *Ibid.*, 2:155, 19 February 1842.

6. *Journal of Discourses*, 11:244.

7. Samuel Sandmel, “Foreword for Jews,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:xi, xiii.

of ancient writings that is the peculiar blessing of our generation.”⁸ Nibley should know, having long delved into these texts from the time he pioneered Abrahamic research in a series of articles published in the *Improvement Era* during the late 1960s and early 1970s.⁹ It is only appropriate that *Traditions about the Early Life of Abraham* is dedicated to Hugh Nibley.

Traditions presents a wide variety of ancient writings that relate to our Book of Abraham, all in English translation. A number of these texts have been translated by the editors themselves. Scholars and lay readers alike will appreciate having these diverse and, in many instances, hard-to-locate texts collected under one cover. A feature particularly useful for the lay reader unfamiliar with these sources is the introductory material preceding each text and explaining something of its origin and provenance. The book even includes selected Abrahamic artwork from ancient sources, an intriguing bonus. (I would point out one minor error: the explanation on page 528 to the illustration from the Cotton Genesis says that the picture represents God commanding Abraham to go to Haran. Actually, according to Princeton’s publication of the Cotton Genesis, this picture represents God commanding Abraham to *leave* Haran.)¹⁰ Enhancing the utility of this useful tome are three indexes, including not only a subject index and a scriptural citation index, but also an index of themes and events from the Book of Abraham, referenced by page number to the texts in the book.

As with any publication of this nature, there are a few inherent limitations and cautions. The editors themselves point out that the collection does not claim to be comprehensive. In addition, the texts have been included on the basis of their manifest apparent, obvious, clear relevance to the Book of Abraham narrative, a criterion

8. Hugh Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986), 95.

9. Hugh Nibley, “A New Look at the Pearl of Great Price,” *Improvement Era*, January 1968–May 1970.

10. Kurt Weitzmann and Herbert L. Kessler, *The Cotton Genesis: British Library Codex Cotton Otho B.VI* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 72 and plates 2 and 166.

that may omit texts (or portions thereof) whose relevance may be significant but not apparent at first blush. Further, readers generally unfamiliar with this material may tend to conclude that the authenticity of a tradition depends on how frequently it occurs throughout the texts included in the book. In fact, some of the most archaic and important Abrahamic traditions are like rare gems, found only in obscure and unique texts, while it may be the case that spurious traditions are oft repeated.

Even so, in *Traditions* we have been given a resource of such magnitude that it could have been compiled only by scholars who love Father Abraham, reminding us of the divine promise given to him, as recorded in the Book of Abraham: “As many as receive this Gospel . . . shall be accounted thy seed, and shall rise up and bless thee, as their father” (Abraham 2:10). We will long remain in the editors’ debt as we use their book to discover more about the works of Abraham and thereby qualify to be his seed.

A MORE RESPONSIBLE CRITIQUE

Kevin L. Barney

In 1997, InterVarsity Press, a Christian publishing house, published the truly groundbreaking *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation*¹ by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson. This was a stunning achievement in religious publishing: a respectful, honest, probing dialogue on matters of ultimate religious significance between a member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and an evangelical Christian, both committed and knowledgeable. This remarkable conversation spawned others, some in the same spirit, others unfortunately not. A *BYU Studies* roundtable²

I wish to thank John A. Tvedtnes and John Gee for their helpful comments on a draft of this review.

1. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997).

2. Matthew R. Connelly, Craig L. Blomberg, Stephen E. Robinson, and BYU Studies Staff, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 163–90. The

Review of Thomas J. Finley. "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" and David J. Shepherd. "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon." In *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 337–95. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002. 535 pp., with glossary and indexes. \$21.99.

surveyed reactions to the book and provided postmortem commentary (including contributions by both Blomberg and Robinson themselves), and an entire issue of the *FARMS Review of Books*³ was given over to a lengthy consideration of the book and its arguments, including an article of over one hundred pages written by Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser. Mosser and Owen had previously come to the attention of Latter-day Saint scholars with their insightful and penetrating essay, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?”⁴ This article was a clarion call to the need (as they perceived it) for a greatly improved evangelical response to Latter-day Saint scholarship. *The New Mormon Challenge*, two chapters from which are the subject of this review, is among the resulting firstfruits of that call. Mosser and Owen are joined by Francis J. Beckwith⁵ as general editors of this volume.

In keeping with the particular historical focus of the *FARMS Review of Books* on material relating to the Book of Mormon, I will limit this review to the two chapters that directly address that volume of scripture. Before I address those particular chapters specifi-

notes to this roundtable identify numerous other reviews, mostly from evangelical sources. See also a review by Eugene England, “The Good News—and the Bad,” *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 191–201.

3. *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999). The contributions to this volume included reviews by Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser, 1–102; Blake T. Ostler, 103–77; and William J. Hamblin and Daniel C. Peterson, 178–209, as well as the following substantive articles: Daniel W. Graham and James L. Siebach, “Philosophy and Early Christianity,” 210–20; David L. Paulsen and R. Dennis Potter, “How Deep the Chasm? A Reply to Owen and Mosser’s Review,” 221–64; and Roger D. Cook, “How Deep the Platonism? A Review of Owen and Mosser’s Appendix: Hellenism, Greek Philosophy, and the Creedal ‘Straightjacket’ of Christian Orthodoxy,” 265–99, with an afterword by the editor, Daniel C. Peterson, 300–328.

4. Paul L. Owen and Carl A. Mosser, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?” *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 19/2 (1998): 179–205.

5. Francis J. Beckwith has coauthored with Stephen E. Parrish two previous books dealing with Mormonism: *The Mormon Concept of God: A Philosophical Analysis* (Lewiston, N.Y.: Mellen, 1991), reviewed by Blake T. Ostler in *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 99–146, and *See the Gods Fall: Four Rivals to Christianity* (Joplin, Mo.: College Press, 1997), reviewed by James McLachlan, “Knocking Over Straw Gods,” *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): 119–57.

cally, however, I would like to offer a couple of general comments on the book as a whole. In particular, I wish to congratulate the book's editors, authors, and publisher. The overall tone of the book was, I thought, very good. It was not perfect, and the editors have work to do if they intend to produce follow-up volumes, but given the vast transformation from traditional anti-Mormon treatments and the undoubted stiff resistance in certain circles to any such change, this was an excellent first effort.

Is Mormonism Christian?

The only thing I found really annoying about the book was the continued insistence that Latter-day Saints are in *no sense* Christian. This is most disappointing since the idea that the Saints are generically Christian should not be that difficult a concept to grasp. Although the wording varies a little from dictionary to dictionary, a Christian is one who is a follower of Jesus Christ, "one who professes belief in the teachings of Jesus Christ."⁶ This meaning is suggested by the Greek form from which the English derives: Χριστιανός *Christianos*, the *-ianos* ending conveying the sense of "partisan" of Christ (analogous forms being Ἡρωδιανός *Hērōdianos* "Herodian" and Καισαριανός *Kaisarianos* "Caesarian"). This is the *public* meaning of the word—the way it is used in public discourse and the way it is defined in dictionaries. Elsewhere Blomberg disparages this meaning of the word, calling it "some very broad and relatively meaningless sense by which every Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox church member, however nominal or sectarian, would also be included."⁷ Exactly! Blomberg or any other evangelical is more than welcome to devise a *private* definition of the word that will exclude Latter-day Saints, but when they do this they must immediately articulate

6. This particular formulation derives from *Webster's Ninth New Collegiate Dictionary* (1987 ed.), s.v. "Christian," which just happens to be the dictionary on my office shelf.

7. Blomberg, "Sizing Up the Divide: Reviews and Replies: III. Reply by Craig L. Blomberg," *BYU Studies* 38/3 (1999): 176–83 at 180.

what that private definition is⁸ and acknowledge that they are not using the word in its commonly understood sense. When they simply say Mormons are not Christian (using an unarticulated private definition), their hearers and readers understand them to say that Mormons do not believe in Jesus Christ (using the public definition, since words are understood to be used in their commonly defined senses unless another sense is indicated). Such evangelicals therefore regularly misrepresent and even defame LDS belief. This is truly offensive to Latter-day Saints such as myself, and I am puzzled as to why they cannot see that.⁹

Blomberg attempts to exclude Mormons from even the “relatively meaningless” public definition of Christian in his chapter entitled “Is Mormonism Christian?” He correctly states that the Bible only uses the term three times and nowhere offers a formal definition (p. 317). He then strives to exclude Mormons from the normative definition by limiting who can be called a Christian, not by articulating a proper lexical definition of the term, but by quoting the *World Book Encyclopedia* article on “Christianity”: “Christianity is the religion

8. I suspect the reason that evangelicals are generally unwilling to articulate with precision their private definitions of the word is that at least some of such definitions likely would have the effect, whether intended or not, of excluding Catholics and the Orthodox, which neutral observers would rightly see as patently absurd. Indeed, some evangelicals expressly deny that Catholics are Christian. See Daniel C. Peterson and Stephen D. Ricks, *Offenders for a Word: How Anti-Mormons Play Word Games to Attack the Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992), 183–84.

9. Carl Mosser, in his chapter “And the Saints Go Marching On: The New Mormon Challenge for World Missions, Apologetics and Theology,” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 413 n. 26, and 66, acknowledges that Latter-day Saints are offended when described as non-Christians, and he claims to “understand why Latter-day Saints feel offense.” Nevertheless, he does “not believe that at this time Mormonism can be categorized as Christian in any very useful or theologically significant sense.” This sentence illustrates my very point. Mosser appears to have in mind some sort of unarticulated doctrinal test. To use the word Christian in this fashion without clearly putting the reader on notice that a nonstandard usage of the word is meant (i.e., one subject to undisclosed evangelical theological limitation) is to perpetrate a linguistic “bait and switch.” Mosser may not find the public definition of the word “useful” or “theologically significant,” but it is by that definition that speakers and writers of English the world over communicate, which is very useful indeed.

based on the life and teachings of Jesus Christ. *Most* followers of Christianity, called Christians, are members of one of three major groups—Roman Catholic, Protestant, or Eastern Orthodox” (emphasis added). Blomberg then concludes, “Based on this definition, Mormonism is clearly not Christian, nor has it ever claimed to be so” (p. 317). While it is true that the Latter-day Saints do not claim to be Catholic, Protestant, or Orthodox, it is manifestly *not* the case that they do not claim to be Christian. In the broad and commonly understood sense of the word, the Saints have always considered themselves to be Christians. I am mystified how a scholar of Blomberg’s evident intelligence, talent, and sensitivity could so misread this encyclopedia text (which certainly does not make the exclusionist claim Blomberg ascribes to it), or for that matter why he would appeal to an encyclopedia rather than proper lexical materials to deal with this question in the first place. This methodology is more in line with sectarian propaganda than sound scholarship.¹⁰

I recently shared the following example with Blomberg in an e-mail correspondence following the appearance of *The New Mormon Challenge*; I think it illustrates well why simply calling Latter-day Saints non-Christian is inherently misleading. A family with several young daughters used to live in my ward. This family was friendly with a neighbor woman, who would often babysit the girls. As Christmas was approaching, the woman gave each of the girls a Christmas gift, which turned out to be a coloring book featuring

10. Contrast with this what I believe to be a proper approach to the issue, as reflected in a 1998 document of the United Methodist Church, entitled *Sacramental Faithfulness: Guidelines for Receiving People from the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day [sic] Saints*, available online at www.gbod.org/worship/articles/sacramental/intro.html as recently as 17 March 2003. Rather than claiming that Latter-day Saints are not Christian, this document explains that they are not within the historic, apostolic Christian tradition, which is a both true and unobjectionable statement (the word *apostolic* being used here in its tertiary sense of referring to a tradition of succession of spiritual authority held, as by Roman Catholics, Eastern Orthodox, and Anglicans, to be perpetuated by successive ordinations from the apostolic age). See Benjamin I. Huff, “Of Course Mormonism Is Christian,” and Kent P. Jackson, “Am I a Christian?” reviews of Craig L. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?” in *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 113–30, 131–37.

Jesus Christ. The girls enjoyed the gift and colored the pictures. Some time later this woman came to the family's home, ashen, and apologized profusely for having given their daughters such a gift. It turns out that the woman had just learned at her church that Mormons are not Christian, and therefore she of course assumed that she had committed a grievous *faux pas* in giving the girls coloring books featuring a deity their family did not believe in. Now in this story the woman understood the claim that Latter-day Saints are not Christian the same way the vast majority of people would, as meaning that they do not believe in Christ. This is because she naturally applied the public definition to her pastor's words.

We can see by this story the mischief that results from the semantic legerdemain of calling Latter-day Saints non-Christian. The fact is, they are Christians in the generic sense of the word, even if, from an evangelical point of view, they are theologically in error and unsaved (i.e., being a Christian is not necessarily tantamount to being right). I personally would have no difficulty with certain shorthand distinctions that would make clear that Mormons neither are nor claim to be historic, traditional, creedal, or orthodox Christians. But to say they are not Christians at all without such a modifier is to fundamentally misrepresent the nature of their beliefs. Since one of the goals of *The New Mormon Challenge* was to avoid such misrepresentations, I was sorely disappointed that it took the position that Latter-day Saints are not Christian in any sense at all. I view this as an intellectually indefensible position, and in my view it severely undermines the credibility of the book.

Finley on the Ancient Near East

So much for my pique over being told I am not a Christian. Let us turn now to Thomas Finley's chapter, entitled "Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?" This chapter is divided into five parts: an introduction, which articulates a number of limitations on the drawing of parallels, followed by sections deal-

ing with writing on metal plates, Hebraisms, names in the Book of Mormon, and the geography of 1 Nephi.

Finley suggests five limitations on the drawing of parallels to establish an ancient Near Eastern background for the Book of Mormon: (1) a parallel should be specific enough that it cannot be explained by general human experience, (2) a parallel should be something beyond what Joseph Smith could have derived from the King James Version (KJV) of the Bible, including the Apocrypha, (3) parallels must be thoroughly examined to see how they function in both contexts, (4) parallels should not be explicable as merely accidental, and (5) anachronisms are more important than parallels. In general I had no difficulty with these statements, although I will address (2) and (5) further below. An extensive literature in Latter-day Saint scholarship deals with the use and abuse of parallels.¹¹ Methodological controls such as these cut both ways and limit not only the drawing of ancient but also nineteenth-century parallels to the text, so it is in everyone's interest to be both fair and rigorous in setting forth such methodological limitations on the use of parallels.¹²

I do have two general comments on Finley's introduction. First, he is setting up parameters for what it would take to *prove* that the Book of Mormon is an ancient text. But Latter-day Saint scholars readily acknowledge that we cannot prove the Book of Mormon to be true. I doubt that it will ever be possible to prove that the Book of Mormon is of ancient origin.¹³ I suspect that God fully intended for this to be a matter in which we must walk by faith. Proof and evidence are not equivalent, however, and while we may be unable to prove the antiquity of the Book of Mormon to a skeptic, substantial evidence is consistent with the antiquity of that book. The issue then

11. For a recent example, see William J. Hamblin, "Joseph or Jung? A Response to Douglas Salmon," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 87–107, and the further material cited at 92 n. 13.

12. This is rather like the fairness inherent in having one child cut and the other choose.

13. For that matter, I also doubt that it would be possible to prove the Bible to be true or that God exists.

becomes how to evaluate the significance of such evidence. I address this matter further in the context of Book of Mormon Hebraisms.

Second, Finley asserts that anachronisms are necessarily more significant than parallels. Here we see a subtle indication of his a priori assumptions. If he were genuinely open to the possibility that the Book of Mormon is a translation from an ancient source rather than a nineteenth-century composition, he would have considered the possibility of translator anachronisms; as it is, he is so convinced the book is a modern composition that this option never enters his mind. Now I fully anticipated that Finley would approach the text with such an a priori assumption. I just wish to make it clear to the reader that there should be no pretense here of some sort of scholarly objectivity. Finley has a predetermined point of view, and he intends to argue his case for that conclusion, like a lawyer writing a brief. I freely acknowledge that I, too, approach the text with certain a priori assumptions, so neither of us is being purely objective in this discussion.

Writing on Metal

Finley's section on writing on metal plates is, together with his introduction, to some extent developed from a paper he originally delivered to the Society for the Study of Alternative Religions in 1998.¹⁴ In my view, the treatment of this theme in *The New Mormon Challenge* is a significant improvement over the original paper. For one thing, I think it is preferable to broach the issue directly rather than in the context of commentary on a single, somewhat dated Nibley article. Also, I previously made note of a number of weaknesses in the original paper,¹⁵ and I see that these items have now all been diligently addressed. This is encouraging and reflects the way a

14. Thomas J. Finley, "A Review of Hugh Nibley's Comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the Lachish Letters," available online at www.irr.org/mit/nibley.html as recently as 17 March 2003.

15. Kevin L. Barney, "A Seemingly Strange Story Illuminated," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2001): 5–10.

legitimate scholar responds to criticism, by improving and honing his work. I commend Finley for his improvements.

In the original paper, Finley argued that writing on metal in antiquity was practically unknown. He now acknowledges that such practices did exist, which is progress. He continues, however, to maintain that the extant examples are not lengthy scriptural texts comparable to the Book of Mormon. So while he now grants a parallel for the writing material, “the dissimilarities in usage with the Book of Mormon outweigh the similarity of material” (p. 342).

I would like to respond in three areas: (1) what claims are made in the Book of Mormon account itself, (2) internal evidence for writing materials in the Old Testament, and (3) external (or archaeological) evidence for writing materials in Old Testament times. Finley observes that many Book of Mormon records are written on metal plates, and he sees this as a kind of theme running through the book. I would concur. I do not, however, interpret this to mean that metal plates were the dominant or even a common medium for writing in Lehi’s Jerusalem. The large plates of Nephi, the small plates of Nephi, and (whether directly or indirectly) the plates of Mormon were all fashioned after the pattern of the brass plates. Therefore, it is only the brass plates that must be viewed as being plausible in preexilic Judea. If the brass plates were not *sui generis*, or at least relatively uncommon, then the narrative of 1 Nephi would make little sense: why would Nephi and his brothers repeatedly risk their lives to take the brass plates from Laban if comparable collections of scripture on metal plates were available elsewhere?

When Finley says that papyrus and leather were the most common media for the scriptures in preexilic Israel, he is guessing; in the absence of actual evidence from that period, we cannot know for sure. His proposal is, however, an educated and reasonable guess. Given that such materials would have been both easier to work with and more economical, it probably was the case that the scriptures were more often copied on papyrus or leather. As we have shown, however, that position is not inconsistent with claims made by the Book of Mormon.

I also recognize the possibility of an element of divine providence at work here, which Finley no doubt would deny, given his assumptions. Had Nephi training as a conventional scribe and were he expert in the preparation of papyrus for writing, what good would that knowledge have done him in the New World in the absence of actual papyrus plants? A good argument has been made that Lehi and his family were metalworkers;¹⁶ this was a technology that would have been transferable to the New World. In addition, this record was intended to last a very long time—therefore a preference for metal, which of course lasts longer than papyrus, makes sense. For these reasons, Nephi’s decision to fashion his own record on metal plates after the pattern of the brass plates appears deliberate.

Finley mentions some of the writing materials other than papyrus and leather referred to in the Old Testament text, such as stone (as with the Ten Commandments) and wood. He only mentions one allusion to writing on metal: “And thou shalt make a plate of pure gold, and grave upon it, like the engravings of a signet, Holiness to the Lord” (Exodus 28:36 KJV). Of course, from a later period, 1 Maccabees 8:22 reads: “And this is a copy of the letter which they wrote in reply, on bronze tablets, and sent to Jerusalem to remain with them there as a memorial of peace and alliance.” This translation comes from the Revised Standard Version (RSV); the annotation observes that “important documents were often inscribed *on bronze tablets*.”¹⁷ But other possible allusions to writing on metal appear in the Old Testament proper.

Isaiah 8:1 KJV reads: “Moreover the Lord said unto me, Take thee a great roll [גִּילְיוֹן *gillayon*], and write in it with a man’s pen [בְּחֶרֶט אֲנוֹשׁ *becheret ’enosh*] concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz.” But the KJV has mistranslated the key terms. A *cheret* is not a “pen” in the sense of an instrument that would use ink but rather a stylus that engraves in a hard surface; Aaron fashioned the golden calf with a *cheret* (Exodus

16. See John A. Tvedtnes, *The Most Correct Book: Insights from a Book of Mormon Scholar* (Salt Lake City: Cornerstone, 1999), 94–97.

17. Bruce M. Metzger, ed., *The Oxford Annotated Apocrypha, Revised Standard Version* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1965), 241, emphasis in original.

32:4). Similarly, a *gillayon* is not a “roll” in the sense of a papyrus or leather scroll but rather a tablet of some kind, whether of metal, stone, or wood. The word occurs only one other time in the Old Testament, at Isaiah 3:23, where it means “tablets of polished metal” (i.e., “mirrors”).¹⁸ Therefore, the Lord most likely commanded Isaiah to write on a large, polished, metal tablet. Although this does not represent a lengthy text, it is yet another allusion to writing on metal in the Old Testament.

Job 19:23–24 KJV reads as follows:

Oh that my words were now written!
oh that they were printed [וַיִּחְקֹן] *weyuchaqu* in a book
[בַּסֵּפֶר] *bassepher*!
That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the
rock for ever!

A contemporary reader might understand Job to be talking about printing a book the way a modern press would, but, of course, at the time of writing the printing press had not yet been invented. The verb חָקַק *chaqaq* does not mean “to print” but “to cut in, to inscribe, to engrave.” This is not a verb one would expect to see used for writing with brush and ink on papyrus. Therefore, a number of scholars have plausibly proposed¹⁹ that the word *book* here (סֵפֶר *sepher*) does not refer to a scroll but to a bronze or copper tablet (based on Akkadian *siparru* “bronze”).²⁰ Accordingly, Edouard Dhorme renders:

18. The KJV renders it “glasses” in the archaic sense, meaning “mirrors.”

19. Edouard Dhorme, *A Commentary on the Book of Job*, trans. Harold Knight (London: Nelson, 1967), 281–82, and bibliography cited therein; Samuel Terrien, *Job* (Neuchâtel, Switz.: Delachaux and Niestle, 1963), 149; Marvin H. Pope, *Job: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1965), 129; *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York: Abingdon, 1954), 3:1050; R. J. Williams, “Writing,” in *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1962), 4:916; and the annotation to this verse in the New English Translation (the NET Bible), available online at www.bible.org/netbible as recently as 17 March 2003.

20. Ignace J. Gelb et al., eds., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1984), 15:296–99. My argument would not be that *sepher* derives from *siparru*, but that the Akkadian word influenced the word choice of *sepher* here.

Oh that my words might be written down!
Oh that they might be engraved on brass,
That with a tool of iron and lead
They should remain engraved in the rock for ever!²¹

An alternative interpretation, based on a Phoenician parallel, would be to understand *sepher* here as meaning “inscription,”²² in which case the writing would be the same as that in “the rock” of the next line. I personally think the parallelism works much better by understanding the book as referring to a bronze tablet, for that would then parallel the rock of the next line rather than refer to it,²³ and both the metal tablet and the rock would convey the sense of a writing meant to last a long time, which the context of the passage requires (KJV “for ever!”). Job is literarily referring to a hypothetical text rather than an actual one, but the hypothetical allusion would not be intelligible unless such texts (writings on bronze tablets) existed in the real world.

The significance of the word *lead* in the final line of the passage is uncertain. A lead instrument would be useless on rock, and so the New International Version (NIV) reads, “that they [i.e., ‘my words’] were inscribed with an iron tool on lead, or engraved in rock forever!” taking this as a reference to lead plates inscribed by the iron stylus.²⁴ Writing on lead plates in antiquity is certainly attested.²⁵ While this translation would further support my argument as an ad-

21. Dhorme, *Job*, 281–82.

22. Henry S. Gehmann, “*Sepher*, An Inscription, in the Book of Job,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 63 (1944): 303–7. Although some modern translations continue to understand *sepher* here as a “scroll,” apparently taking the verb *chaqaq* in a greatly weakened sense, Gehmann shows why the verb should be understood as referring to inscribing into a hard surface of some kind. Gehmann was unaware of the theory that the *sepher* was a bronze tablet.

23. That is, *bronze/rock* (on which inscriptions are carved) works better as a parallel word pair than would *inscription/rock*, as in the former case both terms are the same class of nouns (i.e., materials on which inscriptions are written).

24. Apparently emending *וּעִפְרָה wʿprt* “and lead” of the Masoretic Text to *בַּעֲפֹרָה bʿprt* “on lead.” Pope, *Job*, 129, concurs: “With an iron stylus on lead/Carved in rock for all time.”

25. Compare the *molubdinói chartai* of the Greeks and the *tabulae plumbeae* of the Romans, mentioned in Dhorme, *Job*, 282.

ditional allusion to writing on metal, I am inclined to reject the NIV here, again largely for reasons of parallelism. Rather than referring to one writing material only (the rock), as posited by Gehmann, or three writing materials, as suggested by the NIV or the Anchor Bible,²⁶ I would view the parallelism of the passage as referring to two writing materials, *bronze//rock*, each of which is indicative of a writing that is to last a long time.²⁷

Isaiah 30:8 KJV reads as follows:

Now go, write it [כְּתֹבָהּ *kathebah*] before them in a table
[לִיחַ *luach*],
and note it [חֻקָּה *chuqqah*] in a book [סֵפֶר *sepher*],
that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.

Finley correctly observes that the *luach* is probably a wooden writing board. The same verb and noun combination as in the second line appears in Job 19:23 in a similar context of a writing intended to last a long time (KJV “for ever and ever”). Therefore the allusion in Isaiah 30:8 may also be to a writing on a bronze tablet,²⁸ with the first writing (on wood) containing the headings or a summary, and with the second writing (on metal) containing the full message in permanent form.²⁹ Alternatively, the parallelism of the passage may refer to one writing only, with the reference to both wooden and metal writing tablets simply being formulaic.

When we turn from biblical allusions to the archaeological record, it seems to me that it takes a little chutzpah to deny the plausibility of

26. The NIV posits *scroll//lead//rock* and the Anchor Bible *copper//lead//rock*.

27. I therefore would retain the reading of the Masoretic Text rather than emend the text. The way that lead was used in the process of engraving an inscription into rock is uncertain; among the possibilities are to understand (a) the stylus point as involving an alloy of iron and lead (just as iron and lead stand side by side as elements in an alloy described in Ezekiel 22:20); (b) the lead as being used to outline the lettering for the engravers; or (c) the lead as being used to fill in the grooves once they were cut into the stone.

28. Dhorme, *Job*, 282; Williams, “Writing,” 4:916. Note also that the preposition used here is על *al*; the writing therefore is not *in*, but literally *on* the *luach* and *on* the *sepher*.

29. For the understanding of two records, one a summary and the other a lengthier and more permanent one, see I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah* (London: Soncino, 1980), 141.

the brass plates when the entire universe of extant preexilic scripture is written on metal (by which I mean the two silver plates dating from seventh century B.C. Jerusalem containing a portion of the priestly blessing of Numbers 6:24–26).³⁰ This raises an interesting question: where is all the scripture that presumably existed before the exile? Palestine is not as ideal a location as the sands of Egypt for preserving papyrus and leather, and no doubt much of it simply disintegrated with the ravages of time. But Palestine does have an arid climate, and one can well imagine a biblical minimalist arguing that at least something of that nature should have survived if it really ever existed.³¹

I suspect that part of Finley's response to such a minimalist would be the same as part of my response to him, and that is to point out the serendipitous nature of archaeological discovery. If young Muhammad adh-Dhib ("the Wolf") had not slithered through a hole in the rock in the Judean desert more than fifty years ago, it might well be that we still would not know of the existence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. There may yet be samples of preexilic scripture in existence, whether on papyrus, leather, metal, or some other medium; we cannot conclude from the bare fact that we have not yet found them that they do not now exist, much less that they never existed.

Consider another question: were scriptures ever written on clay tablets? We have hundreds of thousands of such tablets dating from great antiquity, but none of them contain any scripture. The only possible biblical allusion I am aware of to writing on such a tablet is Ezekiel 4:1, in which Ezekiel is directed to draw a plan of Jerusalem on a clay brick. Since less biblical support for writing on clay exists than for writing on metal, presumably Finley would similarly deny that scrip-

30. Finley discusses these plates (p. 340). See further William J. Adams Jr., "Lehi's Jerusalem and Writing on Metal Plates," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 204–6, and William J. Adams Jr., "More on the Silver Plates from Lehi's Jerusalem," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 136–37.

31. After all, our hypothetical minimalist might argue, we do have a seventh-century B.C. (nonscriptural) palimpsest from Wadi Murabba'at, as Finley mentions, as well as scriptural material from the third century B.C. among the Dead Sea Scrolls; if papyrus could survive there for 2,250 years, what is a few hundred more?

tures were ever written on clay tablets. I wonder, then, what he would make of the theory, put forth by D. J. Wiseman and elaborated by R. K. Harrison,³² that the first thirty-six chapters of Genesis contain material originally written in cuneiform on a series of clay tablets. The linchpin to this theory is the repetition of the word תולדות *toledoth* “generations,” which may have been used in the colophon to each successive tablet. Harrison wrote as a conservative Christian scholar, and this theory is probably one of the best possible alternatives to dealing with the data that gave rise to the Documentary Hypothesis of the origins of the Pentateuch. I assume Finley as an evangelical scholar has a commitment to biblical inerrancy, and the Documentary Hypothesis is fundamentally at odds with a strictly inerrantist approach to scripture. I therefore wonder whether Finley would find this theory to be plausible in the face of a lack of hard evidence. If it is plausible that a scriptural record was written on clay tablets—and I think that it is—it strikes me as at least equally plausible that a scriptural record was written on bronze tablets (i.e., the brass plates).

Hebraisms

Turning now to linguistic issues, Finley correctly observes that we do not have the gold plates from which the Book of Mormon derives, nor are we even certain what language or languages the record was written in. This definitely complicates any attempt to study the linguistic background of the book. The Anthon transcript long held by the Whitmer family and now in the possession of the Community of Christ (formerly known as the Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints) has not been deciphered and, absent the discovery of some sort of Rosetta Stone, probably never will be deciphered, though not for lack of trying. Any attempt to decipher the transcript

32. Roland K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1969), 543–53. See also Robert Graves, *Adam's Rib and Other Anomalous Elements in the Hebrew Creation Myth: A New View* (London: Faber and Faber, 1955), who suggests that the early part of Genesis was originally depicted on tablets that were read in the wrong order.

is complicated by at least three factors. First, many scholars have long believed that the Whitmer transcript is actually a poorly drawn copy of the original transcript (notwithstanding the belief of the Whitmer family that it possessed the original), as it does not match the description of the transcript given by Professor Charles Anthon of Columbia University.³³ Second, the characters on the transcript most likely came from Mormon's abridgment of the book of Lehi at the beginning of the plates of Mormon; this means that the script on the plates would have undergone about a millennium of linguistic development from the time of Lehi, including probable influence from New World languages. Third, the English translation of this portion of the record was lost with the 116 manuscript pages Joseph loaned to Martin Harris; therefore, the prospect of finding an English "translation pony" to reverse engineer the transcript is very slim.³⁴ For these reasons, we can only study the original language of the plates by various indirect means. Finley addresses two of these indirect approaches: the study of Book of Mormon Hebraisms and the study of Book of Mormon names.

A Hebraism is an expression, grammatical form, or syntactical structure that is characteristic of Hebrew but not characteristic of the language into which it is translated. To illustrate, consider the Hebrew word לִפְנֵי *liphne*. This word is formed by a combination of

33. Mark Hofmann knew of these scholarly expectations and used them in creating his fraudulent version of the transcript, including putting the writing into columns and providing a large circular structure at the bottom of the page. The fact that the Hofmann transcript was a fraud does not obviate the prior scholarly concern over the originality of the Whitmer transcript. Anthon's letters to E. D. Howe dated 17 February 1834 and to T. W. Coit dated 3 April 1841 are reproduced in B. H. Roberts, *A Comprehensive History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1930), 1:102–7.

34. Barry Fell attempted to reverse engineer the Hofmann transcript using the opening verses of 1 Nephi 1 as a translation pony. This misguided effort was based on an ignorance of the history of the translation. So it was with some surprise that I saw Stan and Polly Johnson, *Translating the Anthon Transcript* (Parowan, Utah: Ivory Books, 1999), attempt to use Ether 6:3–13 as a translation pony in deciphering the transcript. The Johnsons apparently failed to learn from Fell's fundamental error. For a review of the Johnson effort, see John Gee, "Some Notes on the Anthon Transcript," *FARMS Review of Books* 12/1 (2000): 5–8.

the preposition לְ *le* “to, for” and the noun פָּנֶה *paneh* “countenance, face.” This particular noun only appears in its plural form in Hebrew, פָּנִים *panim*, and the construct (or genitival) form of the plural is פְּנֵי *pene* “face of.” Most literally, *liphne* means “to the face of,” which would be abominable English. If an expression such as *liphne Dawid* were rendered into idiomatic English as “before David” or “in the presence of David,” we might have no clue that this was a translation from Hebrew. If, on the other hand, that expression were rendered more literally as “before the face of David,” the pleonastic use of *face* (which is unnecessary in English) would point to a translation from Hebrew or possibly to some other sort of Hebrew influence.

To a certain extent Finley’s treatment of Hebraisms follows that of Ed Ashment³⁵ although apparently Finley only learned of Ashment’s work relatively late in the process of writing his chapter. Finley reacts specifically to the work of John Tvedtnes on Book of Mormon Hebraisms,³⁶ an understandable approach since Tvedtnes’s work is the most recent and linguistically sophisticated survey of the subject in general. Anyone wishing to deal with this subject comprehensively, however, should be aware that an entire body of literature deals with Book of Mormon Hebraisms, beginning early in the twentieth century and continuing to the present.³⁷

35. Edward H. Ashment, “A Record in the Language of My Father’: Evidence of Ancient Egyptian and Hebrew in the Book of Mormon,” in *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*, ed. Brent L. Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993), 329–93.

36. Finley cites John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 79–91.

37. The relevant literature includes Thomas W. Brookbank, “Hebrew Idioms and Analogies in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* (1909–10): 117–21, 234–39, 336–42, 418–20, 538–43; (1914): 189–92; Sidney B. Sperry, “The Book of Mormon as Translation English,” *Improvement Era* (March 1935): 140–41, 187–88; Sidney B. Sperry, “Hebrew Idioms in the Book of Mormon,” *Improvement Era* (October 1954): 703, 728–29; E. Craig Bramwell, “Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young University, 1960); E. Craig Bramwell, “Hebrew Idioms in the Small Plates of Nephi,” *Improvement Era* (July 1961): 496–97, 517; John A. Tvedtnes, “Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon: A Preliminary Survey,” *BYU Studies* 11/1 (1970): 50–60; M. Deloy Pack, “Possible Lexical Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon” (master’s thesis, Brigham Young

Latter-day Saint scholars have typically focused on establishing that parallels with Hebrew characteristics exist. A significant number of such parallels have been firmly established. I believe that knowledge concerning Hebraisms is useful in helping us to understand the text in any event, quite apart from whatever evidentiary value they may have. If, however, we wish to put this literature forward as evidence for the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, then at some point we need to ask in each case whether a given Hebraism is best explained as a relic of an overliteral translation directly from the plates or is derivative from the KJV or some other English source available to Joseph Smith in the nineteenth century (and, in the case of the KJV, thereby an indirect reflection of a Hebraism found in that English text). To illustrate this distinction by an analogy, a Semitism in a New Testament text might point to the Greek being a translation from an underlying Aramaic or Hebrew source, or it might point to the author of the Greek composition simply being a Jew for

University, 1973); Angela Crowell, "Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon," *Zarahemla Record* 17–18 (summer and fall 1982): 1–7, 16; John A. Tvedtnes, "Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?" I Have a Question, *Ensign*, October 1986, 64–66; Brian D. Stubbs, "Book of Mormon Language," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 1:179–81; John Gee, review of *Encyclopedia of Mormonism, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 5 (1993): 172–82 at 179–80; John A. Tvedtnes, review of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon, Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 8–50 at 30–40; John Gee, "La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 50–120; Royal Skousen, "Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon," *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 121–44; Royal Skousen, "The Original Language of the Book of Mormon: Upstate New York Dialect, King James English, or Hebrew?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 28–38; Royal Skousen, "How Joseph Smith Translated the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 28–29; Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999); cf. the discussion in Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford, 2002), 134–35. Numerous treatments also deal with specific examples. For instance, I treat rhetorical interchanges of *number* (a type of *enallage*, Greek for "interchange"), in Kevin L. Barney, "Enallage in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/1 (1994): 113–47, and Kevin L. Barney, "Divine Discourse Directed at a Prophet's Posterity in the Plural: Further Light on Enallage," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 229–34, an

whom Greek was a second language. Trying to parse between these two possibilities can be very difficult and, given the religious significance of New Testament texts, controversial. Notwithstanding the easy assumptions of Ashment and Finley that all Book of Mormon Hebraisms are indirect only, having been absorbed from the English of the KJV, I suspect that trying to make these kinds of distinctions concerning Book of Mormon Hebraisms will be no less difficult or controversial than in the case of the Greek New Testament.

Paul Hoskisson appropriately draws a distinction between Book of Mormon textual evidences that are necessary and those that are sufficient.³⁸ If the Book of Mormon is an ancient text, then we should expect to find parallels with the ancient world. Where such parallels are established, therefore, they count as necessary evidence. To be truly sufficient as proof of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, however, plausible nineteenth-century sources need to be excluded as the possible origin of the characteristic under study.

Hoskisson's study provides us with a useful methodological starting point. In the specific context of Hebraisms, however, I do not want to use the word *necessary* because the existence of Hebraism evidence is in no sense necessary to the Book of Mormon being a translation from a Hebrew language original. Hebraisms by definition are relics of overliteral translation; it is quite possible for a translation into strong idiomatic English to betray no hint whatsoever of its Hebrew origins. Further, rather than working with only two categories of positive evidence of the Book of Mormon, I would like to propose a broader six-point scale for evaluating purported evidence from Hebraisms, with

edited version of which appeared as "Further Light on Enallage," in *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, ed. John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 43–48. For a treatment of rhetorical interchange of *person* in the Book of Mormon, see David Bokovoy, "From Distance to Proximity: A Poetic Function of Enallage in the Hebrew Bible and the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 60–63.

38. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences for the Book of Mormon," in *The Book of Mormon: First Nephi, The Doctrinal Foundation*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1988), 283–95.

1 being the weakest positive evidence and 6 being the strongest. The following is a summary of my proposed weighting paradigm:

1. *Ancient Near East (ANE) + Joseph Smith's pre-Book of Mormon Writings*. This would be a case in which a parallel with the ancient Near East also appears in Joseph's writings prior to the dictation of the Book of Mormon text. In this case, whatever the English source, we would know definitively that the characteristic at issue was part of Joseph's English style. This category is largely theoretical in nature, since we have precious little in the way of writings from Joseph prior to the Book of Mormon.

2. *ANE + KJV (Specific)*. This would be a case in which a parallel exists with the ancient Near East, but the precise wording also exists in the English of the KJV. The relationship of the KJV to the Book of Mormon text is a big and complicated issue concerning which more work needs to be done, but the presumption is that Joseph Smith had pre-Book of Mormon access to the KJV and that the KJV is therefore a possible English source for the Book of Mormon. Finley gives four examples that would fit under this category in a table on p. 344. Since the KJV wording does not precisely match the Book of Mormon wording in these examples, I would characterize them as high 2s (or as a 2+).

3. *ANE + KJV (General)*. This would be a case in which a parallel with the ancient Near East exists, and that characteristic is also *generally* present in the KJV, but with different wording. The KJV is a literal translation, so it reflects Hebraisms in its English. To illustrate, while we have numerous examples of the construct state in the Book of Mormon (such as "sword of Laban" in lieu of "Laban's sword"), such examples also generally exist in the KJV (such as "children of Israel"). In each such case, the reader has a fundamental decision to make: is it more likely that the Book of Mormon usage reflects a literal translation from the plates, or did Joseph "absorb" this usage from the KJV and make it his own in his Book of Mormon dictation? If one approaches the text with the a priori assumption that it

is a nineteenth-century composition, as Finley does, then the latter alternative will always be selected. Conversely, I am sure some Book of Mormon believers would always select the former alternative by assumption. If one is truly open to either possibility in the case of any given Hebraism (such as the “sword of Laban”), however, then the question is not so simple. Some purported Hebraisms might go one way, and others another; each must be evaluated on its own merits, often taking other considerations into account, as we shall illustrate below. This is inherently a subjective and individual judgment.

4. *ANE + Joseph Smith’s post-Book of Mormon Writings.* If the KJV is a possible source tainting the validity of Book of Mormon Hebraisms, it is also true that the Book of Mormon is a possible source for supposed Hebraisms in Joseph’s post-Book of Mormon writings. Ashment selected the 1833 Book of Commandments to use as a control text, and I would agree that this is probably the best such text from Joseph’s writings available: it is in a scriptural style, it was published (or at least prepared for publication) only a few years after the appearance of the Book of Mormon, it is a decent-sized corpus, and it was subject to less editing than the later Doctrine and Covenants. Nevertheless, John Gee is absolutely correct when he points out that most of the Book of Commandments was written *after* the Book of Mormon, and thus is tainted as a control text, since Joseph’s later usage could just as easily have been influenced by his intense work in preparing the Book of Mormon for publication as from the KJV or other English sources.³⁹ In my view, to deny this strong possibility is merely to beg the question, to assume the truth of the proposition which one wishes to demonstrate. I think it is worth looking at Joseph’s later writings for this purpose, but the fact that they are post-Book of Mormon suggests that this evidence should be assigned a

39. Gee, “La Trahison des Clercs,” 87–88, in a section appropriately entitled “*Ante hoc ergo propter hoc?*”

lesser weight than evidence from the KJV, which we know preexisted the Book of Mormon.⁴⁰

5. *ANE + Other English*. This would be a case where a parallel exists with the ancient Near East and is attested neither in the KJV nor in Joseph's other writings but is attested elsewhere in pre-1830 English. Evidence in this category will vary in weight with the probability or improbability that Joseph could have had access to the posited English source. For instance, in a couple of places Finley alludes to rare, archaic English usages he found in the *Oxford English Dictionary*. Since these usages are attested in English, they belong in category 5, but given the low probability of Joseph's access to them, they would count as being high on the 5 scale.

6. *ANE Only*. This would be a case where a parallel exists with the ancient Near East and is otherwise unattested in pre-1830 English.

This weighting paradigm is subject to the following qualifications:

- It is *tentative*. The amount of pre-1830 literature written in the English language is staggering. If we cannot find an English parallel to some characteristic, that does not necessarily mean that one did not exist and that it will not be found with more searching. Therefore, a category 6 Hebraism is always at risk of becoming a category 5.

- The various categories are not necessarily equidistant from one another; they simply reflect a *relative* probity.

- While this is a tool meant to assist us in evaluating posited Hebraisms, the ultimate determination of whether a characteristic derives from the Hebrew of the plates or from KJV usage remains very *subjective*.

40. Ashment's recitation of evidence from the Book of Commandments is problematic on other levels as well, both for not excluding scriptural quotations and for often being inapposite to the form supposedly present. Finley cites this material in a couple of places, but even he notes that many of the examples given were not relevant to the form at issue (492 n. 31). Finley is to be commended for focusing his attention on the KJV evidence, which is the stronger evidence for his point of view.

- This paradigm in and of itself is *not dispositive*. In general, I would view a 1 or 2 as weak evidence, a 5 or 6 as strong evidence, and a 3 or 4 as possible evidence that generally requires further evaluation based on other factors. But it remains possible that a 1 or 2 reflects a genuine ancient Near Eastern parallel, and conversely that a 5 or 6 does not. Further, as Hoskisson noted, the elaborate chiasm at Alma 36, which would be necessary evidence in Hoskisson's scheme or analogous to a 3 in mine (since chiastic forms are attested in the KJV), might well be more persuasive than some trifle that counts as sufficient evidence in Hoskisson's scheme or a 6 in mine.

Having articulated this paradigm, I would like to run through a brief example of how to apply it. I have selected one case that Finley mentions but does not discuss (p. 343): "Hearken, O ye house of Israel, and hear the *words of me*, a prophet of the Lord" (Jacob 5:2). First, we must establish that the ancient Near Eastern parallel exists. The Hebrew word for "word" is דָּבָר *dabar*. The plural form would be דְּבָרִים *debarim*, and the plural construct, "words of," would be דְּבָרֵי *dibre*. The plural construct with the first person singular pronominal suffix would be דְּבָרַי *debaray*. This very literally means "words of me," which of course is not standard English; we would say "my words."

The parallel thus being established, we can apply the paradigm. The specific expression *words of me* does not appear in either Joseph's pre-Book of Mormon writing or the KJV. The Hebrew *debaray* does appear about fifty times in the Old Testament, but it is always translated "my words." Therefore, with no specific KJV parallel, we must next ask if there is a general KJV parallel. The form would be [noun] of [personal pronoun], used to show possession, where normal English would be [possessive personal pronoun] + [noun]. While this construction is quite rare in the KJV, I did find two examples, in the closing verses to a couple of Paul's epistles: "The salutation by the hand of me Paul" (Colossians 4:18) and "The salutation of me Paul" (1 Corinthians 16:21). The awkwardness of the English is overcome in both places by the RSV, which renders the passages as "I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand," which is much better English.

I will also note that I did not find a comparable usage among Ashment's listing of examples from the Book of Commandments. Nevertheless, as this usage is attested in the KJV, I would categorize it as a 3. For someone like Finley, this is all that is needed to reject this example as sufficient proof of the antiquity of the Book of Mormon. For someone like me, however, who is open to a conclusion that any particular Book of Mormon idiom may be either a genuine Hebraism or an adaptation of KJV usage, the inquiry continues. I am influenced by several factors to consider this a legitimate Hebraism reflecting a translation from a Hebrew source. First is the relative rarity and obscurity of the possible KJV source. Second is the genuine awkwardness of the construction in English. Third is the precision of the match between the English wording and the formation of the Hebrew *debaray*. Fourth is the Book of Mormon context; these words appear in a synonymous parallel structure, featuring an attested Hebrew formulaic word pair (*hearken//hear*):⁴¹

Hearken, O ye house of Israel
and *hear* the words of me, a prophet of the Lord.

Indeed, this passage lends itself to an easy retroversion back into Hebrew:

שמעו בית ישראל
ושמעו את דברי נביא יהוה

shime'u beth Yisrael
*weshime'u eth-debaray nabi' YHWH.*⁴²

Such retroversions are of course highly speculative, but my point is simply that I find this particular Hebraism more likely to be based

41. See Kevin L. Barney, "Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 49–50.

42. In this retroversion, I have hypothesized that the same verb is repeated twice, as in Genesis 49:2: "Gather yourselves together, and *hear*, ye sons of Jacob; and *hearken* unto Israel your father," where both verbs reflect *weshime'u*. Alternatively, two different verbs could be used here.

on translation than secondary KJV influence. Finley, of course, would disagree; that is why making these kinds of judgments is ultimately a subjective endeavor.

The Book of Mormon reflects numerous occurrences of the formulaic word pair *heart//soul*, as in 2 Nephi 4:17:

Yea, my *heart* sorroweth because of my flesh;
my *soul* grieveth because of mine iniquities.

This word pair also recurs a number of times in the English of the KJV, as in Psalm 13:2:

How long shall I take counsel in my soul [נֶפֶשׁ *nephesh*]
having sorrow in my *heart* [לֵבָב *lebab*] daily?

I previously theorized that in at least some of the Book of Mormon recurrences the word rendered “soul” may have been קָבֵד *kabed*, literally “liver,” rather than *nephesh*. This usage is reflected several times in the Ras Shamra tablets, as in *UT*,⁴³ 1 Aqht 34–35:

Pgt weeps in her *heart* [*lb*]
She sheds tears in the *liver* [*kbd*]

It is also reflected a number of times in the Old Testament (albeit in a way that is hidden in the English of the KJV), such as in Psalm 16:9 KJV:

Therefore my *heart* [לִבִּי *libbi*] is glad,
and my glory [כְּבוֹדִי *kebodi*] rejoiceth

It is reasonably clear that the Masoretic Text *kebodi* was incorrectly pointed, or voweled; it should be repointed as קְבֵדִי *kebedi* “my liver.” Although the literal meaning of *kabed* is “liver,” as an internal organ used metaphorically for the seat of feeling it would perhaps best be translated in English with the word “soul,” as the RSV takes it in the Psalm 16:9 passage:

43. Ugaritic texts in this article derive from Cyrus H. Gordon, *Ugaritic Textbook*, *Analecta Orientalia* 38 (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965), abbreviated *UT*.

Therefore my *heart* is glad,
and my *soul* rejoices⁴⁴

Hoskisson, working independently from me, also argued that some occurrences of Book of Mormon *soul* may be a translation of Hebrew *kabed* “liver.” Hoskisson notes that in Alma 5:9 we read “their souls did expand,” where the context suggests a meaning such as “they became happy.” He further notes that *soul* is used with the verb *enlarge* in Alma 32:28 and later in that chapter with the verb *swell* (Alma 32:34). This is odd usage, since normally in English a soul does not “expand.” If, however, “soul” here renders *kabed* “liver,” then this usage is right at home in the ancient Near East, as demonstrated by another passage from the Ras Shamra tablets at *UT*, Anath II:25–26:

Her liver [*kbd*] swells [*gdd*] with laughter
Her heart [*lb*] fills up with joy,
Anath’s liver exults.

This passage shows that a liver “swelling” was normal Ugaritic usage indicative of joy.⁴⁵

Hoskisson searched diligently for an English attestation of a soul “expanding,” but he was unable to find one. He did find the phrase *expand the soul* in German, however, so he concluded that this is necessary evidence only, not sufficient evidence. I can appreciate his rigor, but I would look at this a little differently. I would categorize this as a 6 on my scale. To me, the attestation in German simply goes to the tentativeness of that categorization (perhaps we should designate it a low 6 or a 6-). Since it would be years before Joseph would study any German, a German occurrence does not work as a possible source for the Book of Mormon idiom; only if and when the usage is found in English should we drop this evidence from a 6 to a 5.

44. For further details and citations for the material in this and the previous paragraph, see *ibid.*, 51–54.

45. For further details and citations for the material in this paragraph, see Hoskisson, “Textual Evidences,” 284–87.

I mention these arguments about the presence of *kabed* “liver” in the Book of Mormon to make a point about category 3 evidence. Where a Book of Mormon Hebraism is generally attested in the KJV, that in and of itself does not reject that Hebraism as evidence; it simply goes to the *prima facie* weighting of that evidence. If one is open-minded about the possibility that the Book of Mormon is an ancient text, the analysis should not stop there but should continue; recall that Finley himself urged us to examine such putative parallels carefully. The *heart//soul* word pair exists in the KJV, so its presence in the Book of Mormon would qualify as category 3 evidence. If one wishes to reject that evidence, however, the alternative should be considered: Joseph would have had to absorb (whether consciously or subconsciously) the formulaic word pair phenomenon from KJV English and reuse those word pairs as building blocks in different parallel structures, just the way the prophets of Israel did—and all of this at least a century before scholars would observe and begin to talk about the phenomenon of repeating word pairs. Coupling this with other evidence, such as the distinctive usage observed by Hoskisson, I think a persuasive (even compelling) case can be made for the *heart//soul* word pair reflecting an authentic Hebrew usage.

I personally believe that the English of the KJV had some influence on Book of Mormon language. I would therefore reject any notion that one can point to a few strong examples of Hebraisms and conclude that all Book of Mormon Hebraisms of necessity directly derive from a Hebrew translation. Conversely, however, I would also reject any notion that one can point to a few weaker examples of Hebraisms and draw the opposite conclusion across the board. In my view, every purported Hebraism has to be examined carefully for probable authenticity, and this not just by class. That is, one cannot study, say, a single cognate accusative and conclude thereby that *all* cognate accusatives in the Book of Mormon are either authentic or not, as the case may be. Finley’s approach is governed by an all-or-none approach, black-or-white thinking, which seems to have been affected by his inerrantist premises. I would reject such an all-or-none approach to Book of Mormon Hebraisms. I believe our approach to

the evidence should be appropriately eclectic, and we must be open to the evidence, whichever way it points. If the case has already been prejudged, then there is little point in proceeding, except perhaps as some sort of rhetorical exercise.

Book of Mormon Names

Another indirect means of studying the language of the Book of Mormon is to study its onomasticon, or list of names. In a few isolated cases, such as with Bountiful, the names have been *translated* into English. In most cases, however, the names have only been *transliterated* into English; such names therefore are like fossilized little remnants of the original Book of Mormon languages. For instance, at the beginning of the Book of Mormon account we encounter a family and its patriarch, whose name is transliterated in the text as *Lehi*, a name which is easily recognizable as the Hebrew word meaning “jaw” (לֶהִי).

For Finley, the dominant theme of his metals section was the lack of long, scriptural parallels to the brass plates, and the dominant theme of his Hebraisms section was the attestation of Hebraisms in the KJV. The central argument of his names section appears to be that, lacking the original text and dealing with inherent ambiguities in how one transliterates from Hebrew into English, we cannot be certain that the ancient parallels put forward for Book of Mormon names really match with precision their Book of Mormon counterparts. This premise is true, of course, but we must remember that we are working with translation literature. On the other hand, the converse is also true, that Finley cannot be certain that the ancient examples do *not* match their Book of Mormon counterparts. When dealing with ancient attestations of Book of Mormon names, the appropriate standard is not one of absolute demonstration, but of plausibility.

Since Finley is in large measure responding to a specific study of Book of Mormon names⁴⁶ and since two of the authors of that study

46. John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, “Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions,” *Journal of Book Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 40–51.

have prepared their own review of Finley's chapter,⁴⁷ I will make only a couple of brief comments. First, Finley objects to the argument made by Latter-day Saint scholars that the *-ihah* element of a number of Book of Mormon names is a reflection of the *-yahu* (or *-yah*) theophoric element that was common in preexilic Jerusalem. For instance, the name of Lehi's contemporary Jeremiah would be more accurately transliterated as *Yiremeyah* or *Yirmeyahu*, just as the name of Isaiah would be more accurately rendered *Yesha'yahu*. And yet Finley has no difficulty recognizing the KJV transliteration of the *-yahu* or *-yah* element with *-iah*. Book of Mormon *-ihah* works very well as an alternate transliteration of that theophoric element. Should we demand modern scientific precision (perhaps even complete with diacritics) in the lettering of transliterations in the Book of Mormon? Given the extraordinary nature of the translation, I for one would not. If the suffix *-yahu* (or *-yah*) can acceptably be transliterated as *-iah*, I do not see why it could not also be transliterated as *-ihah*. Further, Finley describes how the *-yahu* ending underwent different pronunciation shifts in different locations over time;⁴⁸ does he then imagine that the language of the Nephites was static and frozen in its late seventh century B.C. origins, impervious to linguistic development?

The second comment I wish to make has to do with Finley's discussion of the name Alma. Finley makes three points concerning this name: (1) he begins with his common theme that we cannot know for certain whether the initial *a* in Alma represents the Hebrew *ayin* or *aleph*; (2) he resurrects the old notion that Joseph derived the name from the Latin phrase *alma mater* ("fostering mother") and was simply ignorant that *alma* would be a feminine term and therefore inappropriate for a man's name; and (3) he suggests that Joseph may have

47. See John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper, "One Small Step," in this number of the *FARMS Review*, 147–99.

48. In Finley, "Hugh Nibley's Comparisons," in the paragraph beginning "Torczyner refers to two issues."

picked up the word from a preacher's sermon on Isaiah 7:14, where KJV "virgin" is a rendering of the Hebrew word עַלְמָה *ʿalmah*.⁴⁹

Finley is more than welcome to make the hoary *alma mater* argument, and I wish him luck with it. Either that argument or the notion that Joseph picked up Hebrew *ʿalmah* from a preacher's sermon will work only if we can posit that he was ignorant of the feminine form of the name. It seems to me that such ignorance is a difficult position to maintain in the case of *alma mater* because the Latin had entered English as a common enough woman's given name, Alma, and because in the case of Hebrew *ʿalmah* any preacher who mentioned that Hebrew word surely would have done so in the midst of commenting on the virginity of the young woman of Isaiah 7:14. Indeed, a critic must exercise some caution in pressing such arguments, for if Joseph begins to look *too* ignorant, that begins to interfere with the picture demanded by the environmental theory of Book of Mormon origins, which requires a young man of some intelligence and talent to be able to author the book in the first place.

Finley's comments on the Hebrew here suggest to me that he must have been unfamiliar with Paul Hoskisson's article on the subject.⁵⁰ Hoskisson notes that the initial letter of the name *Alma* as given in the Bar Kochba letters is an *aleph* but that the name probably derives from the root **LM*, with its initial ayin. As Hoskisson observes, "In the final centuries B.C. and the first centuries A.D., in the spoken language among the Jews the consonants *aleph* and *ayin* began to run together. As a result the letters representing those sounds tended to become interchangeable as well."⁵¹ The root **LM* conveys

49. Incidentally, Finley transliterates this word as *ʿalma*, and I could not help but wonder whether his leaving off the final *he*² was a subtle attempt to influence the reader by suggesting a more precise correspondence with Book of Mormon "Alma." I am willing to give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that this is simply Finley's normal manner of transliterating the feminine *-ah* ending, although I could not help but notice that in "Hugh Nibley's Comparisons" he writes the Hebrew word for scroll as *megillah*, not *megilla*.

50. Paul Y. Hoskisson, "Alma as a Hebrew Name," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 7/1 (1998): 72–73.

51. *Ibid.* Note that the Dead Sea Scrolls often confuse the two letters as well.

the basic sense of one who has come to sexual maturity; a segholate noun derived from this root, אֵלֵם *‘elem*, meaning “young man, youth, lad,” occurs a couple of times in the Old Testament (1 Samuel 17:56 and 20:22). The Hebrew word Finley mentions from Isaiah 7:14, *‘almah*, is simply the feminine form of this noun and means “young woman.” Hoskisson theorizes that Alma is a hypocoristic (or shortened) form from the full theophoric form of the name. To spell this out a little more specifically than Hoskisson did in his article:

Verbal root *LM [conveys the basic concept of having reached sexual maturity]

Noun (segholate) *‘elem* [lad]

Plene theophoric form *‘Almi’el* [lad of El]

Hypocoristic form *‘Alma’* [lad of El (hypocoristic)]

When the suffix is added to the segholate noun, the first vowel reverts to its original *a* and the second drops out, as can be seen in an analogous segholate noun used in a theophoric form: from *melek* “king” to the name Malkiel, “El is my king.” The aleph at the end of the name Alma is a trace vowel deriving from the presumed *’el* (or *yahu* or *yah*) of the theophoric element. In the Bar Kochba letters the name appears twice, with slightly different spellings: *’lm’* and *’lmh*. The final *he’* of the second example is clearly *not* a feminine ending; rather, it appears to be a variant *mater* to the *aleph*, each of which reflects the presence of an *a* vowel.

What I find interesting here is Finley’s suggestion that the Book of Mormon name Alma might have had an initial *ayin* rather than *aleph*, for that is Hoskisson’s very argument; further, Finley mentions Hebrew *‘almah*, which is indeed probably a related form to the name Alma. So in his haste to throw water on the significance of the attestation of Alma as a masculine name in the Bar Kochba letters, Finley ends up actually underscoring the strength of Hoskisson’s argument.⁵²

52. For the attestation of this name at Ebla, which Finley also mentions, see Terrence L. Szink, “Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 70.

Hoskisson identified the name Alma as an example of sufficient evidence as he defined it.⁵³ Rather than a 6 in my scheme, however, I would categorize it as a 5, not because of *alma mater* or any such argument, but because the name Alma, though rare, is attested as a male given name in New England and elsewhere prior to the appearance of the Book of Mormon, as the following examples show:⁵⁴

Alma Smith

Gender: M

Christening: 27 May 1798, First Church of Christ, Northampton, Hampshire, Massachusetts

Alma Smith

Gender: M

Birth: 1799, Danby, Rutland, Vermont

Alma Smith

Gender: M

Birth: About 1811, Providence, Rhode Island

Alma A. Smith

Gender: M

Birth: 1823, Tuscaloosa, Alabama

Although it is not a 6, I am tremendously impressed by the post-Book of Mormon appearance of Alma as a male Semitic name, and I personally view it in that light.

Geography

Finley next addresses the geography of 1 Nephi. I frankly found his argument here to be rather odd. The conventional understanding

53. Hoskisson, "Textual Evidences," 288–89.

54. This information derives from a partial search of the name "Alma Smith" on www.familysearch.org. My thanks to Alma Allred (a male, by the way) for this information. We should note, however, that the male gender of these individuals has not yet been independently verified. As one of them was married to someone with the given name "Amasa" (usually a male name, as in "Amasa Lyman"), more research needs to be undertaken to verify that the database correctly reflects the gender of these individuals.

of Latter-day Saints is that Lehi and his family traveled from Jerusalem south “into the wilderness,” veering to the east of the Gulf of Aqaba, heading south-southeast along or near the Frankincense Trail and the eastern shores of the Red Sea, turning eastward at or shortly after Nahom, and then alighting at Bountiful on the coast of the Arabian Sea, from which they departed by boat. Finley notes that the geographic indications in the text are somewhat sketchy, and he correctly observes that the “south south-east” direction indication only applies once the family reaches the Red Sea and does not necessarily convey their direction of travel as they leave Jerusalem. So Finley would have the family leave the city veering west south-west and coming to the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez in the Sinai peninsula, so that as they travel “south south-east” they are doing so along the Gulf of Suez in the western Sinai rather than along the Red Sea in Arabia.

What I found odd about Finley’s argument is that he makes no attempt to describe his alternate route as an implausibility that would argue against a possible historical basis to the Book of Mormon account. Indeed, as a believing Christian he could scarcely do so without also casting serious doubt on the historicity of much of the material in the biblical book of Numbers. So why does he want to place the family in the Sinai rather than in Arabia if that alternate scenario would not advance his cause? Here I believe the cynicism of his argument becomes apparent, as he is aware that Latter-day Saint scholars have painted a highly plausible picture of the journey of Lehi and his family through Arabia to the Sea, and so he wants to place them in a different location.

The implausibility of Finley’s scenario is made manifest simply by looking at a map and considering the “eastern turn.” If I am understanding his argument correctly, he would have Lehi and company go far out of their way to the west, go down the eastern shore of the Gulf of Suez in the western Sinai, then turn *back to the east*, with their Bountiful located on the western shore of the Gulf of Aqaba in the eastern Sinai. Notice that Finley has the group going almost in a full circle. Why would they go so far out of their way when they could simply have gone down the western side of the Gulf of Aqaba to get

to the same spot? Finley realizes this is a glaring weakness in his proposal and therefore suggests that perhaps the Lehites wanted to reenact a portion of the exodus. It is certainly true that a profound exodus symbolism is present in the story, but that symbolism is typological, not literal. Their “Egypt” was the wicked Jerusalem that was on the verge of falling to Babylon; their Canaanite “promised land” was the New World to which they were heading. Yes, they endured a period of “wandering in the wilderness,” but this part of the typology did not literally have to be in the Sinai.

To make his case, Finley tries to portray the “three days in the wilderness” of 1 Nephi 2:6 as describing the journey from Jerusalem, rather than three days of travel after they had arrived at the Red Sea, as Eugene England takes it. I think Finley is almost certainly wrong. To appreciate why England’s reading is correct, we need to read the verse in context with the previous verse:

And he came down by the borders near the shore of the Red Sea; and he traveled in the wilderness in the borders which are nearer the Red Sea; and he did travel in the wilderness with his family which consisted of my mother, Sariah, and my elder brothers, who were Laman, Lemuel, and Sam.

And it came to pass that when he had traveled three days in the wilderness, he pitched his tent in a valley by the side of a river of water. (1 Nephi 2:5–6)

It is true that Lehi and his family went from Jerusalem into the “wilderness,” and the pluperfect “had” of verse 6 could conceivably refer to their initial travel from the city. I find this to be a highly doubtful reading, however. In verse 5 they have already arrived at the Red Sea, and they travel “in the wilderness” near the Red Sea. “In the wilderness” is repeated twice in verse 5, both to inform us that the wilderness was near the Red Sea and to state that Lehi was traveling with his family there. It seems quite clear to me, therefore, that the three days of travel “in the wilderness” of verse 6 refers to the same wilderness as has just been emphasized in the preceding verse, that which is near the Red Sea.

Finley's back-up argument is that even if Lehi and his family traveled in Arabia, there is nothing about the geography of that region that Joseph could not have known. Finley's discussion of this topic is seriously flawed because he displays no knowledge of recent research on the subject. In particular, he discusses Nahom without being aware of two finely carved incense altars that were discovered by a German archaeological team in ancient Marib, near Jebel ("Mount") Nihm in Yemen. One of these altars has been dated to the seventh or sixth century B.C., making it roughly contemporaneous with the presence of Lehi and his group. This altar contains an inscription indicating that it was dedicated by a certain man named Bi'athar of the tribe of Nihm. The now firmly attested presence of the Semitic root *NHM in the right place and at the right time is dramatic new evidence for the Book of Mormon account. Since knowledge of this discovery is widespread in Latter-day Saint scholarly circles and even in popular venues like Internet message boards,⁵⁵ Finley's editors failed him in not apprising him of it. As a result, Finley's entire discussion of Nahom is simply wrong, and it is instructive to see how very much he gets wrong when we actually have a way to verify his arguments.⁵⁶ If Finley really wants to pursue this line of reasoning, he is going to

55. For the Latter-day Saint announcement of the discovery, see S. Kent Brown, "The Place That Was Called Nahom: New Light from Ancient Yemen," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 66–68. Brown provided additional informal commentary on the discovery available online at pub26.ezboard.com/fpacumenispagesfrm47.showMessage?topicID=14.topic as recently as 17 March 2003. More recently, see S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 55–125. There are now three known altars in Yemen with the name NHM inscribed on them; see Warren Aston, "Newly Found Altars from Nahom," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 10/2 (2001): 56–61.

56. If Finley had known of this evidence, I can imagine that he would have pointed to the Arabic *h* in *NHM being a softer form of the letter than the harder *cheth* of the likely Hebrew *NH̄M underlying Book of Mormon "Nahom." Brown cogently addresses this point in "The Place That Was Called Nahom," 79 n. 3: "The exact equivalency of the root letters cannot be assured. It is probable that the term *Nahom* was spelled with the rasped or fricative Hebrew letter for 'h' (ḥet or chet) whereas the name Nihm, both in modern Arabic and in the ancient Sabaean dialect, is spelled with a softer, less audible *h* sound." See G. Lankester Harding, *An Index and Concordance of Pre-Islamic Arabian*

have to start over in another venue, as his discussion in this volume is fatally flawed.

Shepherd on Pseudotranslation

Let us now turn to the other contribution in *The New Mormon Challenge* relating to the Book of Mormon, David J. Shepherd's chapter entitled "Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon" (pp. 367–95). Between the two chapters under review, I preferred this one; indeed, together with the essay by Craig J. Hazen, "The Apologetic Impulse in Early Mormonism: The Historical Roots of the New Mormon Challenge" (pp. 31–57), I thought Shepherd's chapter was one of the strongest contributions to the book. Whereas Finley's approach struck me as more of a hasty reaction, with his dismissing every possible evidence favoring the Latter-day Saint position, I found Shepherd's effort a more thoughtful, more legitimate attempt to create meaningful dialogue.

Shepherd begins his chapter with a lucid discussion of various translation phenomena, describing different senses in which the word *translation* might be used. An *interlingual* translation is translation in the sense we usually think of it, conveying thoughts from one language directly into another. An *indirect* translation is a translation that does not come directly from the original source but from some intermediate language. An example of an indirect translation would be an English rendering of the Vulgate, which is in turn a Latin rendering of the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible. A translation of, say, Genesis directly from Hebrew to English would be interlingual; a translation of Genesis from Hebrew into Latin, and then from Latin into English, would be indirect. An *intralingual* translation is a rendering of a text in the same language as the source—what we

Names and Inscriptions (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1971), 81, 602; and Joan C. Biella, *Dictionary of Old South Arabic: Sabaean Dialect* (Chico, Calif.: Scholars, 1982), 296. One has to assume, it seems to me, that when the members of Lehi's party heard the local name for "the place that was called Nahom" they associated the *sound* of that local name with the term Nahom, a Hebrew word that was familiar to and had meaning for them.

might otherwise call a paraphrase. For example, a couple of intralingual translations of the Book of Mormon itself have been made, whose purpose is to restrict the lexicon and simplify the syntax of the English for the benefit of those with learning disabilities.⁵⁷ The final category Shepherd mentions is *pseudotranslation*, which would be a work purporting to be a translation from another language, but which really is not. An example of a pseudotranslation would be the Living Bible. Originally, its publishers made no effort to conceal the fact that the Living Bible is a paraphrase from an English rendering of the Bible rather than an independent translation from the original languages. As such, the Living Bible was an intralingual translation, and perhaps also in some sense an indirect translation, since it was paraphrasing a text that was itself a translation. Over time, however, the publishers began to try to conceal the nature of the text and put it forward as if it were a genuine translation from the biblical languages. To the extent this claim is made and accepted, the text is a pseudotranslation or “fictitious” translation.

How does one go about differentiating a pseudotranslation from a genuine one? Such differentiation is not always possible. One might look to *external* evidence. One type of such evidence would be a confession of the author, which Shepherd illustrates with an example. Another might be the appearance of a source text. As Shepherd explains, a source text can cut either way. For instance, Jerome claimed to have translated the Vulgate version of Tobit from an Aramaic original, but for a long, long time no such original was known, and the text was therefore believed by many to have been originally composed in Greek. With the appearance of the Dead Sea Scrolls, we now have Semitic (Hebrew and Aramaic) texts of Tobit that make it clear

57. Lynn M. Anderson, *The Easy-to-Read Book of Mormon: A Learning Companion* (Apple Valley, Minn.: Estes Book, 1995), and Timothy B. Wilson, *Mormon's Story: An Adaptation Based on the Book of Mormon* (N.p., 1993). Both volumes were reviewed by Camille S. Williams, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/1 (1995): 3–12; the Anderson volume was also reviewed in the same number of the *Review* by Marvin Folsom, 13–18.

that the Greek text is itself a translation, not an original composition. The appearance of a source text can therefore work to verify the *bona fides* of a translation. Conversely, if a source text in the same language as the purported translation appears, and if dependence on the source can be demonstrated, then it can be concluded that the purported translation is not truly a translation from another language.

Since external evidence will often be lacking, one might also look to *internal* evidence, meaning clues within the text itself as to its own likely origins. A prominent type of such evidence involves the search for anachronistic concepts or ideas. Shepherd appropriately cautions, however, that our knowledge of the ancient world is fragmentary at best, and that such knowledge must always be open to revision in light of new discoveries. Ultimately, distinguishing between genuine translation and pseudotranslation hinges on whether a linguistic transfer from one language to another has taken place and on how this transaction has been represented.

Shepherd then begins to address the question of whether the Book of Mormon is a pseudotranslation. He notes that from the beginning of its existence it has been dogged by accusations of pseudotranslation and fraudulent composition (albeit not necessarily in those terms), which is certainly true. Shepherd writes a little about various attempts to paint the Book of Mormon as a pseudotranslation based on internal evidence. He freely acknowledges, however, the “astonishing” effort on the part of Latter-day Saint scholars to counter this type of evidence and portray the Book of Mormon as in fact a genuine translation. As he notes, “it seems unlikely that early critics could have imagined the volume of research that Mormons have, for example, recently devoted to squaring the cultural picture portrayed in the Book of Mormon with that revealed by Mesoamerican archaeology and anthropology” (pp. 383–84).

As an example of such internal evidence, Shepherd points to the question of whether the metallurgy apparently represented in the Book of Mormon is compatible with the Mesoamerican archaeological record. As Shepherd points out, John Sorenson’s response to this issue has been to emphasize the incomplete and contingent nature

of the archaeological record. Shepherd quotes Sorenson as writing: “Be a little more patient. Recognize the selectivity of the ‘archaeological record.’ Only a fraction of the total record has been, or likely ever will be, dug up” (p. 502 n. 61). Compare this statement from Sorenson with the following quotation:

For those who find such newspaper reports [describing a lack of evidence for the biblical exodus] disturbing, Hoffmeier and Kitchen urge patience. “The biblical record, when you give it a fair test, fits its world and the world fits it,” says Kitchen. “When scholars say such things as ‘We have no evidence,’ that merely means we do not know. Negative evidence is no evidence. It only takes one fool with a spade to dig up a new inscription and, whoosh!, that ‘no evidence’ disappears. I’m just amazed over the 40 years I’ve been in this business how we keep blundering into things you didn’t expect that tie in with the Scriptures. If something doesn’t seem to fit, the answer is to wait and see, not out of cowardice, not out of escapism, but just to see what happens when you have fuller evidence.”⁵⁸

This paragraph concludes an article in *Christianity Today* responding to claims of a lack of evidence for the biblical exodus. Its similarity to the statement Shepherd quotes from Sorenson is palpable. This illustrates that a theistic critic of the Book of Mormon has to tread very carefully when it comes to that book, for his own arguments could easily be turned against that which he himself regards as scripture. Although Shepherd finds Sorenson’s defense tenuous at best, to his credit he does recognize that arguments based on internal evidence “on the basis of anachronism will always be susceptible to

58. Kevin D. Miller, “Did the Exodus Never Happen? How two Egyptologists are countering scholars who want to turn the Old Testament into myth,” *Christianity Today* (7 September 1998). The quotation is the last paragraph of the online edition, available at www.christianitytoday.com/ct/8ta/8ta044.html as recently as 17 March 2003. My thanks to Mike Parker for bringing this article to my attention.

counterarguments that legitimately recognize our incomplete knowledge of the past” (p. 384).

Ultimately, the distinction between genuine and pseudotranslation is largely a linguistic matter. Shepherd acknowledges the evidence that has been put forward for Book of Mormon Hebraisms. Like Finley, he too observes that many such Hebraisms occur in the KJV, so he finds the argument from Hebraism evidence “less than compelling,” but he also acknowledges that “it is impossible to decide with complete certainty whether the Hebraized English undeniably present in the Book of Mormon reflects reliance on existing traditions of Hebraized English (e.g., AV [= KJV]) or an actual Hebrew text” (p. 385).

If internal evidence will not settle the matter definitively, what about the possible appearance of a source text? Shepherd rightly notes that the gold plates are not available, and all sides can agree that they will not be forthcoming—believers because the plates have been returned to the care of Moroni and critics because they never existed in the first place (p. 385).⁵⁹ Several source texts have been suggested over the years. As Shepherd explains, the dominant critical theory of Book of Mormon origins throughout the nineteenth century was the notion that the real source for the book was a manuscript written by Solomon Spaulding (p. 386). Remarkably, even today that theory continues to have its few adherents, but Shepherd intelligently dismisses it. Shepherd also discusses Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* (pp. 386–87). Again, I thought his discussion of this as a possible source text was intelligently handled. While he no doubt grants more plausibility to this than I do, he acknowledges that the parallels are a “suggestive but shaky” piece of external evidence for a source text of

59. While for most purposes Shepherd’s statement is correct, it is not absolutely so. If the Book of Mormon were a fraud, one still must somehow account for the statements of the witnesses to the gold plates. Therefore, a critic might argue that Joseph actually manufactured a set of plates to perpetrate this fraud. In that case, the appearance of such plates, if they could be authenticated as having been fashioned by Joseph’s hand or at his instructions, would serve as strong external evidence against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

the Book of Mormon. Even if Joseph drew some elements from that source, Shepherd rightly recognizes that existing parallels could not begin to explain the English text of the Book of Mormon as a whole.

This discussion inexorably leads to the real substance of Shepherd's paper, which is to point to the KJV Bible as a source text for the Book of Mormon. In particular, Shepherd focuses on the book of Isaiah, appropriately so because of its prominence in the Book of Mormon text. Shepherd briefly mentions variants in the Book of Mormon from Isaiah KJV and references David P. Wright's article on the subject⁶⁰ to suggest that the variants do not reflect a transference from a Hebrew language source but rather are secondary developments from the English KJV. As an example, Shepherd notes that the Book of Mormon includes the conjunction *and* at a number of places where it is not present in the Masoretic Text of Hebrew Isaiah, but where it is present in the Great Isaiah Scroll, the Septuagint, the Syriac Peshitta, or other ancient versions. He argues that the addition, substitution, or omission of conjunctions is often necessary to transform biblical Hebrew into acceptable, idiomatic versions in other languages such as Greek or Syriac, as well as English, for that matter. The same cannot be said for the Great Isaiah Scroll, it is true, since it too is written in Hebrew, but Shepherd heavily discounts the value of that scroll as a witness to the text of Isaiah. Shepherd therefore concludes that "the parallels are simply a function of a partial but explicable overlap in the conjunctive concerns of Joseph Smith and an anonymous Hebrew scribe" (p. 388).

While one might possibly reach this conclusion, I sense a couple of problems here. First, I object to the presumption that we can resolve these conjunctive modifications on a global basis. Each change has to be evaluated individually and considered on its own merits. On a related note, I would further object to the easy rejection

60. David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon . . . and Joseph Smith in Isaiah," (1998; updated, March 2000), available online at www.members.aol.com/jazzdd/IsaBM1.html as recently as 17 March 2003. This paper, in slightly revised form, has been published in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234.

of the Great Isaiah Scroll as a witness to the text. I do of course agree that we should not simply roll over and accept its readings simply because of its relatively ancient date and fortunate preservation, but labeling it “an inferior, late, and popular version of Isaiah, modified in light of a Hebrew-Aramaic hybrid” (p. 388) in *no way* excuses us from considering its readings seriously as possible witnesses to the text in any individual instance. If the Great Isaiah Scroll is inferior, late,⁶¹ or popular, that must be demonstrated in each individual case and cannot be assumed on a universal basis throughout the text. Shepherd seems to be encouraging a massive, even shocking application of the bad-witness fallacy⁶² to what should be an important possible witness to the text of Isaiah. A fundamental principle of good textual criticism is eclecticism, and each reading must be examined on its own merits.

Second, Shepherd seems to envision only two possibilities: either a Book of Mormon variant reflects the original text of Isaiah or it is necessarily an intralingual adjustment to the KJV English made by Joseph. But other possibilities exist. For instance, the Book of Mormon Isaiah was not the original text but rather a developed version that had undergone a textual transmission from the time of Isaiah no less than other copies of that book. Therefore, if other Hebrew copies and ancient versions of Isaiah reflected conjunctive modification from the original, it may well be that the Book of Mormon version did as well, and for similar reasons.

61. Given that the Great Isaiah Scroll predates the earliest manuscripts of the Masoretic Text by about a millennium, it is difficult to see in what sense Shepherd means to call it “late.”

62. The bad-witness fallacy involves the failure to take an ancient witness to the text seriously in any given instance simply because that witness is viewed by the textual critic as among the less reliable witnesses to the text generally. All the evidence for and against a particular variant must be evaluated in every case, for even the worst general witness to a text can sometimes preserve an original reading. This is the principle of eclecticism, which is a fundamental principle of good textual criticism. Ancient witnesses cannot be prejudged and then dismissed and ignored on a global basis.

Shepherd goes on to point out that the Book of Mormon version of Isaiah passages is verbatim the same as the KJV for long stretches; variations often center around italicized passages in the KJV; and variations sometimes appear to be based more on polysemy in the English text rather than on anything that is going on in the Hebrew. He then comes to the substantive point he really wishes to make and which forms the centerpiece of his article. Some Latter-day Saint scholars have suggested, he says, that the Book of Mormon only followed the KJV when it adequately represented the Hebrew; where the KJV diverges from a proper understanding of the Hebrew, however, variants were often introduced into the text. Shepherd then spends several pages demonstrating that translation errors do exist in the KJV of Isaiah, in passages that were quoted in the Book of Mormon *without* revision. Inasmuch as the KJV would appear to be the source for these passages and since the Book of Mormon is portrayed as a translation from an ancient language, the Book of Mormon—at least in relation to the Isaiah passages—is a pseudotranslation as defined by Shepherd. He then subtly suggests that we can extrapolate from this conclusion with respect to the Isaiah material a similar conclusion with respect to the book as a whole.

I agree with Shepherd that translation errors appear in the KJV and that some of these are reflected in the Book of Mormon. For example, Isaiah 2:4 KJV and 2 Nephi 12:4 agree in reading in part:

And he shall judge among the nations
and shall rebuke [הִכִּיחַ *hokiach*] many people.

Shepherd points out that while the Hebrew verb *hokiach* does appear with the sense of “rebuke, reprove, chide” elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible (such as at Proverbs 9:7–8; 15:12; and 19:25), modern scholars agree that because of the parallelism both here and at Isaiah 11:3 in this passage the verb means “to decide, judge.” Modern translations therefore render it “settle disputes” (NIV), “render decisions” (NASB), or “arbitrate” (NRSV). Donald Parry, a conservative Latter-day Saint scholar, renders it thus:

Thus he will judge among the nations,
And he will *settle the case* for many people.⁶³

Parry would also agree with some, though not all, of Shepherd's other examples. So where Isaiah 3:2–3 KJV and 2 Nephi 13:2–3 render the terms *qosem* (קֹסֵם) and *nebon lachash* (נְבוֹן לַחֲשָׁשׁ) as “the prudent” and “eloquent orator,” respectively, these terms in reality should be rendered something like “diviner” and “expert enchanter,” respectively, which is indeed the way Parry renders them.⁶⁴ At Isaiah 3:24 KJV and 2 Nephi 13:24, the word *niqpah* (נִקְפָּה) is rendered as “a rent” (i.e., a tear), but in reality the word should be rendered “a rope,” which is again the way Parry renders the word.⁶⁵ Although we could multiply examples, this should be sufficient to make the point.

Further, I would agree with Shepherd that some of the introduced variants in the Book of Mormon seem to cluster around italicized words in the KJV and also that some variants seem to depend more on polysemy in English than on anything in the Hebrew text. I think it is correct to say that elements of intralingual translation occur in some Book of Mormon Isaiah passages.

Latter-day Saint scholars of course do not all agree among themselves on these matters, and they sometimes take different views concerning just what the Book of Mormon represents. Royal Skousen introduced these issues by writing about various evidences for “tight” versus “loose” control over the translation.⁶⁶ In other words, he explores to what extent the translation is direct and literal, as opposed to a paraphrase or restatement in Joseph's own words of ideas that came into his mind during the translation process. Suggestive of a “tight” control over the language of the translation are (1) a number of witness statements that suggest Joseph would put his face in a

63. Donald W. Parry, *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 43.

64. *Ibid.*, 46.

65. *Ibid.*, 49.

66. Royal Skousen, “Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon,” *BYU Studies* 30/1 (1990): 41–69, at 50–56.

hat to exclude outside light and then would see the wording of the translation, given a sentence at a time as he dictated it; (2) evidence that proper names were not just pronounced but actually spelled out; and (3) Semitic textual evidence such as Hebraisms, names, or structural elements (such as chiasmus). Suggestive of a “loose” control are (1) the poor grammar of the English text as it was first dictated; (2) the explanation of Doctrine and Covenants 9:8 that Joseph was to “study it out in his mind” and then ask the Lord if it were right; (3) the possibility that Joseph used a King James Version in the production of the text (which bears directly on our issue and to which we shall return); and (4) the reality that Joseph permitted and even participated in the editing of the text. Skousen made it clear that he preferred a tight control model of the translation. My own approach is to apply the eclecticism of a textual critic to these categories. I acknowledge these various types of evidence spelled out by Skousen, and so I simply do not prejudice the case. I try to keep an open mind about whether a given passage might be on the tighter or looser end of the spectrum. I accept various types of Semitic textual evidence, which does point to tight control, but I also believe that Joseph’s role in the translation involved more than simply reading the English text from a divine teleprompter. Most of the Book of Mormon is a redacted text, and if we read very carefully we can sometimes discern the hand of the redactor (Mormon) in the text. But the Book of Mormon is also a translated text, and I believe that at times we can also discern the hand of the translator. Since I accept Joseph as a prophet in his own right, I see the incorporation of occasional interpretations, explanations, and commentary on the ancient text by the modern prophet as a positive characteristic of the text as we have it.⁶⁷

67. I would include the possibility of Joseph “expanding” the text with authoritative commentary, interpretation, explanation, and clarification under the rubric of “loose” translation. I would view such an expansion as simply being a little more extensive form of translator’s gloss. The possibility of such expansions in the text has been articulated in Blake T. Ostler, “The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source,” *Dialogue* 20/1 (1987): 66–123, rejected in Stephen E. Robinson, “The ‘Expanded’ Book

I think Shepherd, without realizing it, gives the model for how we should look at the Book of Mormon in general as translation literature. In his conclusion he states: “Although it will be faint praise indeed for defenders of Smith’s ‘translation’ work, it seems clear to the present author that the Book of Mormon is the most complex, ambitious, and influential pseudotranslation that the world has ever seen or is, indeed, ever likely to see” (p. 395). Now, look again at some explanatory text Shepherd wrote near the beginning of his essay:

One example of such complexity [i.e., between the distinctions “author” and “translator” or “original composition” and “translation”] has been identified by Rita Copeland in the *Ovide Moralise*, medieval texts in which translation and commentary/original composition are freely interspersed without any demarcation or delineation between them to alert the reader. Early Bible translation shows the same blurring of distinctions: Jewish Aramaic translations or “targums” often integrate supplementary material drawn from earlier traditions seamlessly into their usually quite literal renderings of the Hebrew Bible. (p. 369)

I do not view the Book of Mormon as a pseudotranslation because, unlike Shepherd, I believe there has been a linguistic transfer from the record of the plates. But it does not necessarily follow that every word of the Book of Mormon is a translation in precisely the sense of, say, Richmond Lattimore’s translation of Homer’s *Odyssey* into English. I like the analogy of the Targums, which are a mixture of interlingual translation and explanatory materials and commentary, often interwoven in such a way that without access to the original source text it would be quite difficult to tell precisely where the

of Mormon?” in *The Book of Mormon: Second Nephi, the Doctrinal Structure*, ed. Monte S. Nyman and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 391–414, and clarified in Blake T. Ostler, “Bridging the Gulf,” *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 103–77. I accept the possibility of such interpretive material in the text, but we should be clear that not all Latter-day Saint scholars do.

translation stopped and the explanatory comments began. I would therefore proffer an addition to the lexicon; I would characterize the Book of Mormon not as a pseudotranslation, but as a *complex* translation, much like a Targum.

Returning to the use of Isaiah KJV in the Book of Mormon, I see at least three issues.⁶⁸ First, why does the Book of Mormon reproduce long stretches of Isaiah KJV rather than presenting a completely fresh translation of whatever was on the plates? I think the key to understanding this is to be found in Doctrine and Covenants 128:18. There Joseph has just quoted Malachi 4:5–6 KJV verbatim, and he then says, “I might have rendered a plainer translation to this, but it is sufficiently plain to suit my purpose as it stands.” Similarly, quotation of the KJV in the Book of Mormon is no guarantee that such KJV text is without error or is a precise match to what was on the plates, only that it is “sufficiently plain” to communicate the message to be conveyed. We live in an era when you can walk into a bookstore and find the Bible printed in dozens of translations, but in Joseph Smith’s era the Bible and the KJV were virtually synonymous. It made sense to present biblical quotations in the language of the commonly accepted version, the KJV. Therefore, much of the Isaiah material in the Book of Mormon may be a sufficiently close *representation* of the original as opposed to a new and specific translation of that material.

Second, how was this use of the KJV mechanically accomplished? The short answer is that we do not know. The witness statements indicate that Joseph had no books present, and since he dictated with his face covered to exclude light, it is difficult to see how Joseph could simultaneously be reading from a printed KJV. Perhaps the witness statements are from different periods in the translation; most of the Isaiah quotation would have come near the end of the translation sequence, in 2 Nephi (assuming the priority of Mosiah). Maybe

68. A fourth issue would be the quotation in the Book of Mormon of material deriving from Deutero-Isaiah, a hypothetical author scholars would date to after the time the Lehighites left Jerusalem. Shepherd does not address this issue, presumably because as an inerrantist the existence of a Deutero-Isaiah would be no less a difficulty for him.

Joseph memorized the text; while this is possible, to memorize so many chapters of Isaiah KJV near verbatim would be a prodigious feat indeed. Maybe the Lord or an angel dictated the text to Joseph, as suggested in the “divine teleprompter” theory.⁶⁹ All we can be certain of is that, no matter how it was done, the KJV was used as the basic source for the Isaiah passages, since the characteristics of the Book of Mormon text make such reliance quite clear.

Third, what are we to make of the variants from Isaiah KJV in the Book of Mormon? I address this issue in this number of the *Review*.⁷⁰ Contra Shepherd, I do believe that some of the variants reflect textual restorations or alternate translations and therefore are interlingual in nature. Nevertheless, I also believe that some of the variants address issues present in the KJV English and therefore are intralingual in nature. I see the variants as working in a variety of ways to accomplish a number of different things.

As I have already indicated, I would reject the label of *pseudotranslation* for the Book of Mormon as a whole; I would prefer the term *complex translation*, which reflects my belief that a linguistic transfer has taken place but also my openness to viewing Joseph Smith as an active participant in the translation process rather than as a mere passive conduit for divinely dictated words. With respect to the Isaiah passages in particular, I do not think that anyone is operating under the illusion that Joseph specifically translated the words on the plates and just happened to reproduce the English of the KJV. The KJV is an obvious source for these sections, one we make no effort to hide, nor could we hide it even if we were so inclined. The KJV was used as a readily available, accepted, and sufficiently close representation of the actual Isaiah text that was on the plates, which may have varied at points from the simple Isaiah KJV presentation. So the issue really boils down to whether the plates existed and whether they in fact contained Isaianic material. At this point, the reader will likely return

69. The characteristics of O, the original Book of Mormon manuscript, make it quite clear that the Isaiah material was dictated, just as was the rest of the Book of Mormon, and that a scribe did not visually copy a King James Version of the Bible.

70. Kevin L. Barney, “Isaiah Interwoven,” in this number of the *FARMS Review*, 353–402.

to his or her a priori assumptions, some to the position that the plates existed and others to the position that they did not.

Is there any sense in which the Book of Mormon could be called a pseudotranslation? Some elements of pseudotranslation as defined by Shepherd may be present. I would nevertheless object to the use of the term for the following reasons. First, I think the term would be inappropriately applied to isolated elements only, as opposed to a translation as a whole. If someone misunderstood a Targum to be *in toto* a tight, literal rendering of its source, that would not change the fact that a fundamental interlingual transfer had indeed taken place. Second, the term *translation* itself (derived from Latin *transferre*, “to carry across”) as used with respect to Joseph’s revealed scriptures is—or at least should be—already understood in a very broad sense. Third, unlike interlingual, indirect, and intralingual translation, the notion of pseudotranslation is not an objective status that inheres in the text itself but is rather a subjective status that depends entirely on the knowledge and understanding or lack thereof of a particular reader. If I understand portions of the Isaiah KJV to be representational in nature, if I understand some of the Isaiah variants to be intralingual translations, if I acknowledge the presence of a midrashic element in the text, and if my understanding is correct, then as far as I am concerned the text contains no pseudotranslation whatsoever. And I am unwilling to use the term vis-à-vis the way others understand the text because that presumes that my understanding is necessarily correct, whereas in fact I might be the one who is wrong. Fourth, it is well known that the prefix *pseudo-* means “false,” and given the historic polemical abuse of such terms as *cult* and *Christian* I am quite confident that it would not be long before a carefully defined scholar’s term meant to describe the incorrect assumptions of some readers concerning the nature of certain portions of the text were twisted into a blatant assertion that the text itself is simply “false.” For all of these reasons, I reject the proposed application of the term *pseudotranslation* to the Book of Mormon in favor of my proposed alternative, *complex translation*.

Even though ultimately I disagree with Shepherd's thesis, I appreciated his chapter. I found it to be both thoughtful and sensitively written, and it caused me to think more deeply about the nature of one of our foundational volumes of scripture.

ONE SMALL STEP

John A. Tvedtnes and Matthew Roper

In 1997 Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, then graduate students at the Talbot School of Theology at Biola University in California, presented a paper entitled “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics, and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?” at a regional meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society. It was subsequently published in *Trinity Journal*.¹ Noting that most evangelical responses to beliefs and practices of members of the Church of Jesus Christ came from uninformed sources (what we would call “anti-Mormons”), they proposed a new direction. They began by drawing attention to the scholarly training and publication record of Latter-day Saint researchers and suggested that it was time for evangelical scholars to lend their expertise to responding to this research. The

1. Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, “Mormon Scholarship, Apologetics and Evangelical Neglect: Losing the Battle and Not Knowing It?” *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 19/2 (1998): 179–205.

Review of Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen. “Introductory Essay”; Thomas J. Finley. “Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background”; and David J. Shepherd. “Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon.” In *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 334–95. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002. 535 pp. with glossary and indexes. \$21.99.

book being reviewed here, a follow-up to that suggestion, assembles articles written by various evangelical scholars. Despite their credentials (Ph.D.s and Th.D.s), some of them make the same mistaken assumptions as their less educated coreligionists.

In this review, we shall address only a portion of *The New Mormon Challenge*: part 4, labeled “The Book of Mormon.” It includes an introductory essay by the editors, followed by two articles—one by Thomas J. Finley, “Does the Book of Mormon Reflect an Ancient Near Eastern Background?” and the other by David J. Shepherd, “Rendering Fiction: Translation, Pseudotranslation, and the Book of Mormon.”

The introduction has an error—one that can lead to some misunderstandings about the Latter-day Saint position. The editors write, “According to Smith and the Latter-day Saints, the theological aspect of the record contains the ‘fullness of the gospel’ that was lost when early Christianity suffered a ‘Great Apostasy’” (p. 334). While it is true that we believe in an apostasy in early Christianity, it is not tied to the “fulness of the gospel” that is claimed for the Book of Mormon. The Book of Mormon itself is not the only source of restoration of truths that were lost—an honor that also belongs to “other books” (1 Nephi 13:39–40) and more especially to revelations received by the Prophet Joseph Smith. The Nephite record contains the “fulness of the gospel” because it describes in detail the nature of the atonement of Christ. The main thing lost in the apostasy was the priesthood, which was not restored by the Book of Mormon but by angelic ministrations.

Although Latter-day Saints frequently use the term *gospel* to refer generally to all truths to be learned through the restoration, there is a much narrower meaning found in the scriptures. The gospel is the good news of Christ’s atonement, and its first principles and ordinances include faith, repentance, baptism, and receiving the Holy Ghost. This is the gospel as it is set forth in the Book of Mormon (1 Nephi 10:14; 15:13–14; 3 Nephi 27:13–21; Ether 4:18), the Doctrine and Covenants (D&C 3:20; 13:1; 20:9; 27:5; 33:11–12; 39:5–6; 42:12; 76:40–42; 84:26–27; 107:20; 135:3; 138:2–4, 57), and the Pearl of Great Price (JS—H 1:34; Articles of Faith 3–4). Doctrine and Covenants 93:51 uses the expression “the gospel of salvation,” while Abraham 2:11 speaks of “the blessings of the Gospel, which are the blessings of salvation,

even of life eternal” (cf. D&C 128:5, 17). In Jacob 7:6, the gospel is defined as “the doctrine of Christ,” referring to the doctrine concerning Christ, rather than the totality of Christ’s teachings, since he had not yet been born when these words were uttered (cf. Mormon 3:21; D&C 76:82). Elsewhere, the Book of Mormon equates the “fulness of the gospel” with coming “to the knowledge of the true Messiah” (1 Nephi 10:14; 15:13–14; cf. 3 Nephi 20:30–31; D&C 19:27). The Book of Mormon contains the most lucid explanation of the atonement of Christ (see especially 2 Nephi 2, 9; Mosiah 15; Alma 34, 42) and therefore clearly qualifies as containing the fulness of the gospel.

Unfortunately, from the works they cite, neither Finley nor Shepherd appears to be well acquainted with the scholarly literature on the Book of Mormon, and this critical weakness impairs their approach to the subject. We hope that by reviewing what they have written we can help them and other scholars to take a more in-depth look at the issues.

Shepherd on Translation and Pseudotranslation

David Shepherd is not the first to consider the question of translation vs. pseudotranslation in the case of the Book of Mormon. In 1986 Richard Lloyd Anderson compared the Book of Mormon with gospels that are known or at least generally believed to be fraudulent.² Shepherd might have begun with an examination of Anderson’s work and then included a critique in his essay.³ Shepherd’s work is flawed by the fact that he is unacquainted with an array of scholarly work that has been done on the Book of Mormon.⁴

2. Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Imitation Gospels and Christ’s Book of Mormon Ministry,” in *Apocryphal Writings and the Latter-day Saints*, ed. C. Wilfred Griggs (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1986), 53–107.

3. Ironically, Shepherd discusses some of the same texts that Anderson examined (see, for example, 376, 386).

4. Shepherd should have consulted Donald W. Parry, Jeanette W. Miller, Sandra A. Thorne, eds., *A Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography* (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1996). Also, since its inception in 1989, the *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* (subsequently changed to the *FARMS Review of Books* and now called the *FARMS Review*) has published annual bibliographies of published works relating to the Book of Mormon.

After examining the text of the Book of Mormon, David Shepherd concludes that the Book of Mormon is not a real translation of a real text, but a pseudotranslation or pretended translation.⁵ While we disagree with his conclusions, we acknowledge that his approach is at least somewhat fair. After having presented some evidence, he adds that “As convincing as much of the above material would seem to be, it should be pointed out that this type of internal evidence is fundamentally weakened by the frank realization that our knowledge of the ancient world is fragmentary and must always be open to revision in the light of new discoveries” (p. 381).

Shepherd admits that searching for anachronisms “will always be susceptible to more or less plausible counterarguments,” since “even if a particular text is viewed suspiciously on account of anachronisms and/or unusual or unexpected content, this does not necessarily imply pseudotranslation. While these issues of content may be relevant in judging the antiquity of a document, distinguishing between translation and pseudotranslation is ultimately a matter of assessing whether or not a linguistic transfer has taken place and how this transaction (or lack thereof) has been represented” (p. 381). He also admits that “arguments based on internal evidence that suggest pseudotranslation on the basis of anachronism will always be susceptible to counterarguments that legitimately recognize our incomplete knowledge of the past” (p. 384). Such declarations are a positive step in the dialogue between Latter-day Saints and those who reject the scriptures brought to light by Joseph Smith.

One of the problems that Shepherd notes is the lack of an original text. “It seems safe to presume,” he writes, “that a bona fide translator, in order to validate his claims to have translated the source text faithfully, will be keen from the outset either to include a copy of the

5. For examples of recent pseudotranslations that rely on Latter-day Saint scriptures but purport to be translations of ancient texts discovered in a European archive, see John A. Tvedtnes’s review of David T. Harris, *Truths from the Earth*, volume 2, in *FARMS Review of Books* 9/2 (1997): 68–73.

original language text or provide accurate information regarding its whereabouts” (p. 380). That would be ideal, of course, but it is a modern idea that was not the standard for scholars of Joseph Smith’s day (or even a century ago); moreover, it has not always been possible. For example, the apocryphal book called Ecclesiasticus in the 1611 King James Version (KJV) of the Bible (and known as Ben Sirach to most scholars) was known only from Greek manuscripts until the mid-twentieth century when Hebrew fragments of the text were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls and at nearby Masada. Another example is the *Discourse on the Abbaton* by Timothy I, the late fourth-century A.D. archbishop of Alexandria and patriarch of the Coptic Orthodox Church. The text purports to be a translation from an earlier source text, but using Shepherd’s methodology, it is impossible to determine whether it was originally written in Greek, Hebrew, Syriac, or was merely a pseudotranslation originally written in Coptic. Equally significant is the fact that no early Hebrew version of the Gospel of Mark is known, though some scholars believe that the available Greek text is a translation from Hebrew or its related language, Aramaic.⁶ Shepherd grants that “the Koine Greek of the New Testament itself shows traces of Semitic influence. But unlike Tobit, no Hebrew or Aramaic ‘original’ of the New Testament has thus far come to light” (pp. 381–82).

On occasion, Shepherd steps outside the bounds of a study of translation vs. pseudotranslation to discuss other issues. He notes, for example, that the question of metallurgy in ancient America

has prompted considerable research by scholars such as John Sorenson. Although it seems that some other professional archaeologists have been reluctant to be drawn into such discussions, the limited response suggests that the archaeological record simply does not support the presence of the type

6. See, e.g., Robert L. Lindsey, *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (Jerusalem: Baptist House, n.d.).

of metallurgy and metalworking in Mesoamerica *during the period relevant* to the ancient American setting of the Book of Mormon. Sorenson's primary explanation for the lack of early evidence is to emphasize the incomplete and contingent nature of the archaeological record. (p. 384)

We fail to see how "the limited response" says anything about the archaeological record. Sorenson has not, however, used the evidence for metallurgy to support the Book of Mormon but merely to counter critics by showing that the door is not yet closed on this issue. With so few pre-Classic sites excavated in Mesoamerica (most of the attention is given to Classic sites), one should not be surprised that little evidence has been found for metal working in that geographic and temporal horizon.

Shepherd assumes that

considerable efforts have been expended to demonstrate that the English text of the Book of Mormon is a translation of a text written in either Egyptian or, as is often suggested, Hebrew (albeit in Egyptian script). In the case of the latter, for instance, the English text is examined for Hebraisms, that is, deviations from idiomatic English that reflect linguistic interference from the Hebrew original that supposedly lies behind the English version of the Book of Mormon. For example, John Tvedtnes has uncovered numerous "Hebraisms," which he sees as clear evidence that the English Book of Mormon is a translation of a Hebrew source. (p. 384)

As Tvedtnes read the Book of Mormon, he simply noticed examples of Hebraisms and did not dig for supportive evidence. Although Shepherd

finds the case for Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon less than compelling, it is impossible to decide with complete certainty whether the Hebraized English undeniably present in the Book of Mormon reflects reliance on existing traditions

of Hebraized English (e.g., AV [KJV]) or an actual Hebrew text. The absence of external evidence and our corresponding reliance on internal evidence will not allow the case to be closed definitively. (pp. 384–85)

“Everyone concerned,” according to Shepherd, “seems resigned to the fact that no source text in ‘reformed Egyptian’ will be forthcoming—the doubters, because of their belief that the source never existed, the believers because they believe it has been returned to heaven” (p. 385). However, Hebrew and related Aramaic texts are now known to have been written in Egyptian characters in the time of Lehi, and neither Shepherd nor anyone else, as far as we can determine, has read the relevant studies or commented on them.⁷

Unlike many anti-Mormon writers, who continue to circulate explanations that were long ago disproved, Shepherd acknowledges that the Spaulding manuscript “bore little resemblance to the Book of Mormon,” saying that it was Fawn Brodie’s “authoritative dismissal of the ‘Spaulding Theory’ that dealt it its death blow” (p. 386). Unfortunately, that theory still lives on in the minds of some critics.

Shepherd agrees with Brodie that the Book of Mormon owes “its debt to nineteenth-century America rather than to antiquity” (p. 383). And while he rejects the Spaulding manuscript as a source for the Book of Mormon, he sees, instead, reliance on the King James Version of the Bible and Ethan Smith’s *View of the Hebrews* (pp. 386–87). Commenting on John W. Welch’s assessment of the “unparallels” between *View of the Hebrews* and the Book of Mormon,⁸ Shepherd maintains that the two texts differ from each other because “Joseph Smith might well have

7. See the following articles: John Gee, “La Trahison des Clercs: On the Language and Translation of the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 51–120; John A. Tvedtnes and Stephen D. Ricks, “Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 156–63; John Gee and John A. Tvedtnes, “Ancient Manuscripts Fit Book of Mormon Pattern,” *Insights* (February 1999): 4–5.

8. John W. Welch, “View of the Hebrews: ‘An Unparallel,’” in *Reexploring the Book of Mormon*, ed. Welch (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1992), 83–87.

chosen not to follow it on various ‘major’ points, whether out of a fear of incurring charges of plagiarism by agreeing too much with it or perhaps out of a genuine disagreement with Ethan Smith’s account on any number of different grounds, including theological, literary, or historical” (p. 504 n. 71). By this reasoning, the Book of Mormon could be demonstrated to have derived from Ethan Smith’s work whether it agrees or disagrees with that source.⁹

Shepherd believes that Stan Larson “shows quite conclusively that the Book of Mormon’s version of the ‘Sermon on the Mount’ is demonstrably dependent on the English version that appears in the AV Gospel of Matthew” (p. 387). And he does “not find the critique of R. Skousen . . . sufficiently convincing to vitiate Larson’s thesis” (p. 504 n. 75). He does not refer to the response of John W. Welch (the target of Larson’s criticism) to Larson, which appeared in the same volume as Skousen’s response.¹⁰

Shepherd targets Tvedtnes’s study of the Isaiah variants in the Book of Mormon, though he misstates the argument. He refers the reader to David P. Wright’s response to this essay, in which “Wright shows that the divergences are most easily and economically ex-

9. Finley admits that “it is clear from the ‘unparallels’ that *View of the Hebrews* was not the sole or even the primary source for the Book of Mormon” (p. 387). One wonders if he, like some other critics, believes that Joseph Smith used the expensive five-volume Irish atlas showing the Comora islands or the *Wonders of Nature*, which describes the effects of volcanic eruptions, or some of the centuries-old magical books that others suggest he used. For our part, we find it difficult to believe that Joseph Smith was so well read that it took decades and sometimes more than a century for critics to scour the libraries to “find” the “sources” he reputedly used. The fact that Joseph’s mother wrote that he hardly ever read seems not to bother any of these people. Lucy Mack Smith, *History of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Improvement Era, 1902), 84.

10. John W. Welch, “Approaching New Approaches,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 145–86. See also Welch, “The Sermon at the Temple and the Greek New Testament Manuscripts,” in his *Sermon at the Temple and the Sermon on the Mount: A Latter-day Saint Approach* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 145–63. This was a response to Stan Larson’s original article, “The Sermon on the Mount: What Its Textual Transformation Discloses concerning the Historicity of the Book of Mormon,” *Trinity Journal* 7 (1986): 23–45.

plained as Smith's response to italicized words in the AV, his desire for smoothing and harmonizing irregularities, and his willingness to include additional material (such as conjunctions)" (p. 388).¹¹ A more recent study of the original and printer's manuscripts of the Book of Mormon shows that the words that are italicized in the King James Version of Isaiah were usually included in the manuscripts, but that they were dropped prior to the actual printing of the Book of Mormon.¹² This argues against Wright's suggestion that Joseph Smith knew that the italicized words represented material not reflected in the Hebrew but necessary for the flow of the passage in English. It seems clear that the italics, the centerpiece of Wright's argument, did not influence Joseph Smith in making modifications to the biblical text. Based on the new data, we cannot know who decided to remove or modify those italicized words. It could have been Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, or even the typesetter.

Shepherd's condemnation of the Book of Mormon on the ground that it includes what now appear to be KJV errors seems to be his only means of testing his claim that the text is a pseudotranslation. He mentions Wright's point about "instances where erroneous AV translations were uncritically reproduced by Joseph Smith in BoM Isaiah" (p. 389). We find no serious problem with this, since it is well known that New Testament quotations from the Old Testament tend

11. See John A. Tvedtnes, "The Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," a book-length preliminary report (Provo, Utah: FARMS TVE-81), and the shorter version, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, ed. Monte S. Nyman (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 165–77. Wright's article, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," found on the Internet, has recently appeared in Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe, eds., *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature, 2002), 157–234. Tvedtnes plans to review that material in the pages of the *FARMS Review*.

12. Royal Skousen has been working on a multivolume study of the Book of Mormon manuscripts, of which the first two volumes, *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, and the two-part *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, were published by FARMS in 2001.

to draw upon the Greek Septuagint rather than the Hebrew text, even when the Greek is mistranslated. Writers of scripture, it seems, use whatever version of the scriptures is familiar to their audiences. Consequently, we are not troubled by the examples given by either Shepherd or Wright.

“Although it will be faint praise indeed for defenders of Smith’s ‘translation’ work,” Shepherd writes, “it seems clear to the present author that the Book of Mormon is the most complex, ambitious, and influential pseudotranslation that the world has ever seen or is, indeed, ever likely to see” (p. 395). Given Joseph Smith’s minimal education, what appears to be his disinterest in reading prior to 1829, the short time span during which the Book of Mormon was dictated (roughly two months), and his rather parochial surroundings, we believe that the Prophet’s claim to have had divine assistance in the translation of the Book of Mormon remains plausible.

Finley on the Book of Mormon and the Ancient Near East

At the 1998 annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, Thomas J. Finley delivered a paper entitled “A Review of Hugh Nibley’s Comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the Lachish Letters.”¹³ In that paper he listed several criteria that should be met in order for comparisons between the Book of Mormon and ancient Near Eastern texts to be valid. He began his most recent article with a reiteration of

13. Finley’s critique of Hugh Nibley’s use of the Lachish Letters as evidence for the Book of Mormon was read to the Society for the Study of Alternative Religions (SSAR) at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, 19 November 1998, in Orlando, Florida. The paper, “A Review of Hugh Nibley’s Comparisons between the Book of Mormon and the Lachish Letters,” has been posted on the “Mormons in Transition” Web site at www.irr.org/mit/nibley.html. Nibley’s article, “The Lachish Letters: Documents from Lehi’s Day,” appeared in the *Ensign*, December 1981, 48–54, and was reprinted in Nibley, *The Prophetic Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1989), 380–406. Of Finley’s many objections to Nibley’s article, we are especially mystified by the fact that he objects to Nibley’s use of the only study of the Lachish letters available to him at the time Nibley’s piece was published. Surely Finley cannot expect Nibley to have been sufficiently clairvoyant to know that a later study of the letters would take the place of the earlier one. Even if all his points were valid, this would reflect negatively on Hugh Nibley, but not on the Book of Mormon.

the first four criteria plus one additional criterion.¹⁴ We are in general agreement with his lists.¹⁵ We would, however, add two other criteria:

- A parallel is strongest when the two texts are set in the same geographical, temporal, and cultural context. Thus, when Lehi attributed to his ancestor Joseph the same prophecy attributed to him in early Jewish texts unavailable to Joseph Smith, we consider the parallels to be strong support for the Book of Mormon.¹⁶

- An accumulation of parallels is evidence for a common milieu if not a common source. Thus, if one finds (as is, indeed, the case) that a number of Christian writers who lived prior to the fourth century A.D. describe ten or more beliefs or practices known from their time that were introduced by Joseph Smith long after Christianity had forsaken them, this is prima facie evidence for the Prophet's contention that he received the information by divine inspiration. The

14. "1. A parallel should be specific enough that it cannot be explained other than by general human experience. 2. A parallel should be unique to the Lachish Letters and not more readily explained by sources that were easily available to Joseph Smith, such as the KJV. 3. Any parallel should be examined thoroughly to see how it functions in both contexts. . . . 4. One should always keep in mind the possibility of accidental parallels." Finley's original fifth criterion was specific to the Lachish letters that he was discussing, though it could be applied to other similar studies: "One should also remember the nature of the Lachish Letters themselves. They do not give comprehensive descriptions of their times but offer only brief and usually fragmentary insights into particular issues. They are also subject to various interpretations because of their fragmentary nature."

15. Actually, we find the example that he gives in his third criterion to be opaque. The terminology in this case is certainly descendant. It would also have been nice if Finley had elaborated some means of determining when an anachronism might be the result of prophecy (say in Isaiah's prophecy of Cyrus or the prophecy of Josiah in 1 Kings 13:2) rather than anachronism.

16. See John A. Tvedtnes, "Joseph's Prophecy of Moses and Aaron," *Insights* 21/1 (January 2001): 2. Hugh Nibley has been especially active in comparing Latter-day Saint scriptures with texts from antiquity. For example, some of the parallels in his *Enoch the Prophet* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1986) are not strong evidence for the Book of Moses because the parallel quotations are from non-Enochian texts. But where they are quotations from an Enoch text, they are certainly relevant. Douglas F. Salmon argued against the use of parallels in his "Parallelomania and the Study of Latter-day Scripture: Confirmation, Coincidence, or the Collective Unconscious?" *Dialogue* 33/2 (2000): 129–56. See the review of this article in William J. Hamblin, "Joseph or Jung? A Response to Douglas Salmon," *FARMS Review of Books* 13/2 (2001): 87–107.

parallels would be weaker if attested only in early Jewish texts since Joseph Smith claimed to be restoring the early Christian Church.

Finley's general approach is more sophisticated than that of earlier critics of the Book of Mormon. We are, however, disappointed because he seems unaware of much of the Book of Mormon scholarship that has been published during the past few decades. We suspect that the fault may lie in what his editors provided him. When commenting on an article entitled "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions,"¹⁷ Finley's arguments make it clear that he did not consult the work of Jeffrey R. Chadwick and Terrence L. Szink, whose earlier articles were cited in the notes,¹⁸ nor does he consider other articles on the names Lehi and Sariah in the same issue of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*.¹⁹ This seems to indicate that Finley never actually held a copy of the journal in his hands but was responding to only one article sent to him.²⁰

Another concern, particularly in view of Finley's background in Bible studies, is his discussion of the language of scriptural translations. "It is true," Finley writes, "that one would expect a translation of ancient material to occur in the idiom of the translator, but in this case the language of the KJV [King James Version] was already archaic even in the time of Joseph Smith" (pp. 338–39). But the language found in the

17. John A. Tvedtnes, John Gee, and Matthew Roper, "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 40–51.

18. Jeffrey R. Chadwick, "Sariah in the Elephantine Papyri," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 196–200; and Terrence L. Szink, "Further Evidence of a Semitic Alma," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 70.

19. "Seeking Agreement on the Meaning of Book of Mormon Names," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/1 (2000): 28–39.

20. One of the distinctive features of Finley's article is his general ignorance of Book of Mormon scholarship and his repeated lack of attention to the full range of scholarship on an issue. This is particularly disappointing given Parry, Miller, and Thorne's *Comprehensive Annotated Book of Mormon Bibliography*. Perhaps Mosser and Owen's complaint still holds with respect to the Book of Mormon: "Currently there are (as far as we are aware) no books from an evangelical perspective that responsibly interact with contemporary LDS scholarly and apologetic writings." Mosser and Owen, "Losing the Battle," 181.

KJV was already archaic in the time of King James. The KJV was not a direct translation from the Hebrew and Greek texts of the Bible but is a slightly modified version of the Bishop's Bible (1569). Written instructions from the archbishop of Canterbury to the members of the translation committee specified that they were to modify the wording of the Bishop's Bible only when its wording did not agree with the meaning of the Hebrew Old Testament or Greek New Testament texts. The Bishop's Bible was in turn a revision of the Great Bible (1539), which was a revision of Taverner's Bible (1539), which was a revision of Matthew's Bible (1537), which was a revision of Coverdale's Bible (1535), which was in turn based on the translation made by William Tyndale in 1526–31. Tyndale relied in part on the translation prepared in the late fourteenth century by John Wycliffe, and he retained some of Wycliffe's wording.

Finley claims it is “highly likely that Joseph Smith was imitating the style of the KJV rather than translating an ancient Hebrew original” (p. 365). Why could he not have done both? Why must one assume that the use of KJV style excludes his translating an ancient text? The KJV set the standard for scriptural language in Joseph Smith's day. He seems to have used this style in his translation of the Book of Mormon, the Books of Abraham and Moses, and also in the revelations found in the Doctrine and Covenants. But Joseph Smith was not alone in following this practice. Nearly a century after the publication of the Book of Mormon, Robert H. Charles prepared his magnum opus, a two-volume translation of ancient texts known as *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament*.²¹ Charles made it a point to imitate the style of the King James Version of the Bible. He did so for several reasons; for example, the New Testament cited some of these works or earlier writings on which they were dependent. Because the KJV was the Bible most commonly read in the English-speaking world, this ensured that readers of Charles's work would readily make the tie between the KJV and those other texts.²² Oxford

21. Robert H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913).

22. See the appendix of this review for examples from Charles's work.

University Press continues to publish Charles's book. Jewish scholar Theodor H. Gaster intermingled KJV language and modern English in his *Dead Sea Scriptures*.²³ When citing passages from the Dead Sea Scrolls that were also found in the Bible, he employed the older style of English. When Robert L. Lindsey began his work in Israel with the Gospel of Mark, he initially translated it "into simple modern Hebrew from the Greek text. The text was then distributed to Hebrew-speaking readers and comments invited." Many of those who reviewed the work expressed "the desire that the Gospels, as ancient works, should be read in Old Testament Hebrew style."²⁴ Lindsey returned to the task and prepared a translation of Mark in biblical Hebrew that has received wide acclaim.

It is possible that the Book of Mormon might have met with the same fate as Lindsey's modern Hebrew version of Mark had Joseph Smith rendered it in nineteenth-century English. It would not have sounded scriptural to Americans and Englishmen acquainted with the King James Version of the Bible. Another reason for using the KJV style in the Book of Mormon is that it makes it easier for the reader to recognize when the Nephite prophets were paraphrasing or quoting biblical books. The language of the Book of Mormon fills the same role as Charles's translation of apocryphal and pseudepigraphic texts.

Finley's general approach is laudable, but we find fault with some of the details. We are concerned that he sometimes comments only on the weakest points made by Latter-day Saint scholars and ignores the stronger ones.

Metal Records

According to one of the earliest criticisms of Joseph Smith's account of translating the Book of Mormon from the golden plates, the ancients never wrote on metal but only used materials such as

23. Theodor H. Gaster, *The Dead Sea Scriptures* (New York: Anchor Doubleday, 1956).

24. From Robert L. Lindsey's introduction to *A Hebrew Translation of the Gospel of Mark* (Jerusalem: Baptist House, n.d.), 76; see also 78–79.

papyrus or parchment.²⁵ This claim is false; during the mid- and late-twentieth century hundreds of ancient texts written on metal plates have come to light. Like the Book of Mormon plates, many of these were also buried in stone boxes.²⁶

Finley does not, however, repeat the argument that the ancients never wrote on metal plates.²⁷ Instead, he uses the backup position established by the critics after it had been demonstrated that this practice actually existed. “There is no question,” he admits, “that metal was sometimes used as writing material in the ancient world, including the Near East. However, such examples do not seem to parallel the lengthy Book of Mormon, since they normally contain a small amount of material and imitate standard writing procedures for the time” (p. 340).

By not advancing the earlier position held by critics of the Book of Mormon, Finley makes Joseph Smith’s claim to have translated from metal records acceptable, though earlier critics found this claim preposterous. Once the original argument can no longer be maintained, critics concentrate on a narrower aspect.²⁸ In this instance, Finley

25. See, for example, John Hyde Jr., *Mormonism: Its Leaders and Designs* (New York: Pettridge, 1857), 218.

26. See H. Curtis Wright, “Ancient Burials of Metal Documents in Stone Boxes,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 2:273–334. The article was based on Wright’s earlier study, “Ancient Burials of Metallic Foundation Documents in Stone Boxes,” *Occasional Papers, University of Illinois Graduate School of Library and Information Science* 157 (December 1982): 1–42. Wright drew on Richard Ellis’s Yale University doctoral dissertation on Mesopotamian foundational deposits.

27. In this connection, Hugh Nibley’s observation seems almost prophetic: “It will not be long before men forget that in Joseph Smith’s day the Prophet was mocked and derided for his description of the plates more than anything else.” Hugh Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert, The World of the Jaredites, There Were Jaredites* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 107.

28. This tactic can be illustrated by Thomas Key, author of *A Biologist Examines the Book of Mormon*, 14th ed. revised and enlarged (Marlow, Okla.: Utah Missions, 1995). Key argued that the Book of Mormon was wrong in claiming that the Jaredites brought bees to the New World, for bees were not known in the Americas prior to the coming of Columbus. In a private communication with Key, Matthew Roper noted that the Book of Mormon mentions bees only in connection with the Jaredite travels in the Old World,

does not adopt the earlier argument against the concept of writing on metal plates but instead focuses on the narrower claim that none of the other metal records are lengthy accounts like the Book of Mormon.

To support this claim, he cites three examples of metal documents that have been discussed by Latter-day Saints. Two tiny silver scrolls containing excerpts from the priestly blessing in Numbers 6:24–26 were discovered in Jerusalem and date to preexilic times, providing a clear example of scriptural texts written on metal. Finley does not feel that these are relevant to Book of Mormon examples since the text contains only brief excerpts and “they are tiny scrolls that were rolled up in such a way that a string could be inserted through the center so they could be worn around the neck” and were therefore meant to serve as phylacteries (p. 340). The two Darius plates found in a stone box at the palace of Darius have often been cited by Latter-day Saints as an example of records written on metal plates and buried in a stone box. Finley complains that these contain “only eight lines of cuneiform writing repeated in three languages” (p. 340).²⁹ The famous *Copper Scroll* (one of the Dead Sea Scrolls) is obviously a much lengthier text; however, according to Finley, “unlike the brass or gold plates discussed in the Book of Mormon, this work attempted to imitate a ‘standard parchment scroll.’ The text did not contain religious or literary matter but ‘appears to be an administrative document which simply enumerates, in a dry bookkeeping style’ the inventory of items” (p. 341).

prior to their ocean crossing. Roper also provided an extensive bibliography of articles written by scholars outside the Church of Jesus Christ who clearly demonstrate the presence of bees and the harvesting of honey by the Maya of Mesoamerica in pre-Columbian times. Rather than drop the argument, Key just reinvented it, acknowledging that while there were bees in ancient Mesoamerica, they were unknown in what is now the state of New York.

29. Actually, only the Elamite text comprises eight lines; the Persian text takes up to ten lines and the Babylonian seven, for a total of twenty-five lines for each plate. Darius was not the only ancient king named in ancient metal plates; one of the plates of the Assyrian king Sargon II, deposited at Khorsabad, has thirty lines of script.

Clearly Finley wants to show that, in contrast to the documents described by the Book of Mormon, ancient records on metal were rare, were short, did not contain religious material, and in form normally imitated scrolls, but one wonders how Finley can generalize from a few examples. That some metallic documents had short texts is clear from the Jerusalem silver scrolls and the short text of the Darius plates, yet the *Copper Scroll* has a much longer text. The tiny silver documents from Jerusalem were clearly made in imitation of scrolls, but the Darius plates certainly were not; and while the *Copper Scroll* may not contain religious material, the preexilic documents from Jerusalem, although short, contain scripture. Rather than provide a negative contrast with the Book of Mormon, even these few examples show that ancient metallic documents include a variety of elements, forms, and uses.

Finley's discussion of metal plates is inadequate. He fails to deal with several standard Latter-day Saint sources on the subject of ancient metal plates, including studies by Franklin Harris,³⁰ Paul Cheesman,³¹ Curtis Wright,³² and William Hamblin.³³ While the works of Cheesman and Harris are now out of print, the omission of the latter two is curious. Wright's article is a standard discussion of the issue from a Latter-day Saint perspective. Hamblin has surveyed about thirty examples of plates known from the archaeology and literature of the ancient Near East and Mediterranean region. Although not comprehensive, Hamblin's survey highlights the variety of plates used in antiquity. He shows that (1) writing on metal plates was a relatively old practice dating back to the third millennium B.C. in Mesopotamia in the general region and at the approximate time

30. Franklin S. Harris Jr., *The Book of Mormon Message and Evidences* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News Press, 1953), 95–105.

31. Paul R. Cheesman, *Ancient Writing on Metal Plates* (Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1985).

32. H. Curtis Wright, "Metallic Documents of Antiquity," *BYU Studies* 10/4 (1970): 457–77.

33. William J. Hamblin, "Sacred Writing on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean" (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1994).

of the Jaredite departure, (2) it was known in the Syro-Palestinian region and Israel, (3) some ancient Near Eastern peoples wrote on metal plates in scripts that can reasonably be described as reformed Egyptian, and (4) evidence suggests that the practice of writing ancient sacred law on metal plates was adopted by Greeks and Romans from the ancient Near East sometime between the seventh and sixth centuries B.C., approximately the time when Lehi's family retrieved the plates of brass and commenced their own tradition of keeping records on metal.

The longest texts that Finley mentions are the *Copper Scroll* and the trilingual plates of Darius. A more recent find is much longer:

On Sunday, the twentieth of July 1986, P. Neve could record the surprising, first-time find of a metal tablet, which was made on the occasion of the restoration work on the inner side of the Hittite city wall for Yerkapi. The findspot, lying 35 meters west of the Sphinx gate in the south of the old city, proved to be a pit, dug about 30 cm under the surrounding plaster street level, in whose clay fill the bronze tablet lay horizontally embedded. This consisted of a rectangular plate of 35.0 x 23.5 cm in length and width and a thickness of 8 to 10 mm. Its weight was 5 kg. In the corners on the small side, two circular holes 1.8 cm in diameter are cut out, through which formerly ran a bronze chain 31 cm long consisting of 13 pieces. . . . The actual metal plate is closely written on both sides after the fashion of a clay tablet and is, on each side, divided into two columns. . . . Each column contains about 100 lines with the exception of column IV, which is less closely written, with the height of the characters being about 3 mm.³⁴

The text on the bronze tablet was published in German in 1988 and in English in 1995. The English translation of this tablet of 350 lines takes ten pages and discusses a treaty between Tudhaliya IV of

34. Heinrich Otten, *Die Bronzetafel aus Boğazköy: Ein Staatsvertrag Tuthalijas IV* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1988), 1; translated into English by John Gee.

Hatti and Kurunta of Tarhuntassa, giving the genealogy of the dominant party as well as historical precedents and religious dimensions to the treaty.³⁵ It curiously “represents the sole example of a metal tablet yet recovered from Hatti, although such objects are elsewhere mentioned in Hittite diplomatic documents.”³⁶ And yet Finley claims that “there is no parallel among materials in cuneiform writing for the many plates it would have taken to record even the book of 1 Nephi” (p. 341). This is demonstrably untrue.

Nor should we forget the Egyptian examples of metal plates, which Finley does not mention.³⁷ Two bronze plates are found in the British Museum (BM 57371 and 57372), one of which (BM 57371) contains fifty-eight lines of demotic text, while the other contains a bilingual inscription of which thirty-one lines of the hieroglyphic and sixteen lines of the demotic inscription are preserved. Both plates were written by the same individual, who can confidently be dated to the first century B.C.³⁸ In reference to these bronze plates, one scholar notes that “the value of all metal during the ancient period virtually excludes the survival of such records except in the most fortuitous circumstances. The practice would certainly have been more common than the surviving material would suggest.”³⁹ He further notes that “since the two tablets are inscribed on both sides they can hardly have been intended for display in the temple of Dendera.” He reasons that “the most likely place for them to have been kept would have been in a temple treasury or magazine and to have been found with a hoard or hoards of ritual and

35. Gary Beckman, *Hittite Diplomatic Texts*, 2nd ed. (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1999), 114–23.

36. *Ibid.*, 108, with references to tablets of silver and iron.

37. For an overview, see Adel Farid, *Fünf demotischen Stelen aus Berlin, Chicago, Durham, London und Oxford mit zwei demotischen Türinschriften aus Paris und einer Bibliographie der demotischen Inschriften* (Berlin: Achet Verlag, 1995), 198.

38. *Ibid.*, 413, Abb. 30.

39. A. F. Shore, “Votive Objects from Dendera of the Graeco-Roman Period,” in *Glimpses of Ancient Egypt: Studies in Honour of H. W. Fairman*, ed. John Ruffle, G. A. Gaballa, and Kenneth A. Kitchen (Warminster, Eng.: Aris and Phillips, 1979), 158.

votive objects enumerated here.”⁴⁰ The plates of brass were similarly kept in Laban’s “treasury” (1 Nephi 4:20).⁴¹

While not lengthy, a number of other examples of writing on metal plates are worth mentioning. One copper tablet calls itself “the Phylactery of Moses.”⁴² It was excavated in Acre near Syracuse, and although written on copper, it was supposed to have been written on a gold plate.⁴³ The thirty-two lines of Greek text describe how Moses was protected in the holy of holies from the divine presence there. The text also has specific instructions about it being “something that you should not hand over to anyone except your offspring.”⁴⁴ Though the text dates to the end of the second century or beginning of the third century A.D. and was found farther away in the Mediterranean basin, it shows a *terminus ad quem* for this Jewish practice.

A gold plate from about a century earlier was discovered in 1827 during the excavation of the Cefn Hendre in Segontium (Caernarvon), Wales.⁴⁵ The gold plate dates from the earliest period of Roman occupation of the site, although no details of the discovery are known. “The text preserves a Jewish liturgical formula written in Greek letters,” but the underlying language of most of the text is Hebrew.⁴⁶ The plate is rather small (only twenty-six lines), but it is worth noting for its material (gold), Jewish elements, and Hebrew written in a non-Hebrew script.

While Finley focuses on examples from the ancient Near East, metal plates from the greater Mediterranean region are also relevant since the Greeks and Romans seem to have adopted the practice from the ancient

40. Ibid.

41. For a discussion of treasuries as a repository for writings, see John A. Tvednes, “Books in the Treasury,” chap. 9 in *The Book of Mormon and Other Hidden Books* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 155–66.

42. Roy Kotansky, *Greek Magical Amulets: The Inscribed Gold, Silver, Copper, and Bronze “Lamellae”: Part I. Published Texts of Known Provenance* (Opladen, Germany: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1994), 126–54.

43. Ibid., 129–30.

44. Ibid.

45. Ibid., 3.

46. Ibid., 4, 8–9.

Near East. In addition to the examples surveyed by Hamblin, other metal plates include the bronze *Tabula Contrebiensis* (87 B.C.),⁴⁷ the *Tabula Bembina* (104 B.C.),⁴⁸ the Entella Tablets (254–241 B.C.),⁴⁹ and the Larinum Bronze tablet (A.D. 19).⁵⁰ The Iguvium Bronze Tablets (first to second century A.D.) are among the most significant surviving examples of bronze plates. These consist of seven bronze plates, five of which are written on both sides; they explain the details of Umbrian sacrificial rituals and contain, as Hamblin has noted, the sociological “equivalent of parts of Leviticus and Deuteronomy, which the Book of Mormon claims were on the Hebrew bronze plates.”⁵¹ Significant for other reasons as well, the Iguvium plates—“written partly in an Etruscan, partly in a Latin alphabet—are all that remains to us in writing of the Umbrian language.”⁵² They are “the only extant records of any considerable extent in the Umbrian dialect; that is, in that language which, with Oscan, Latin, and several other dialects, makes up the Italic branch of the Indo-European family. . . . No other body of liturgical texts from pre-Christian Europe can compare with the Iguvine Tables in extent. They have therefore an extraordinary importance both for the linguistic and the religious history of early Italy.”⁵³

47. J. S. Richardson, “The *Tabula Contrebiensis*: Roman Law in Spain in the Early First Century B.C.,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983): 33–41; Guillermo Fatás, “The *Tabula Contrebiensis*,” *Antiquity* 57 (1983): 12–18; Peter Birks, Alan Rodger, and J. S. Richardson, “Further Aspects of the *Tabula Contrebiensis*,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 74 (1984): 45–73.

48. Harold B. Mattingly, “The Two Republican Laws of the *Tabula Bembina*,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 59 (1969): 129–43; Mattingly, “The Extortion Law of the *Tabula Bembina*,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 60 (1970): 154–68; Mattingly, “The Agrarian Law of the *Tabula Bembina*,” *Latomus* 30 (April–June 1971): 281–93.

49. William T. Loomis, “Entella Tablets VI (254–241 B.C.) and VII (20th century A.D.?),” *Harvard Studies in Classical Philology* 96 (1994): 127–60.

50. Barbara Levick, “The *Senatus Consultum* from Larinum,” *Journal of Roman Studies* 73 (1983): 97–115.

51. Hamblin, “Sacred Writings on Bronze Plates in the Ancient Mediterranean,” 17.

52. Giuliano Bonfante and Larissa Bonfante, *The Etruscan Language: An Introduction* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), 48.

53. James Wilson Poultney, *The Bronze Tables of Iguvium* (Baltimore: American Philological Association, 1959), 1.

Nephi and other Book of Mormon prophets indicated that one of the chief values of the plates of brass, in addition to records themselves contained on them, was their value in helping to preserve the language of their fathers. Thus Nephi reminded his brothers, “It is wisdom in God that we should obtain these records, that we may preserve unto our children the language of our fathers” (1 Nephi 3:19). Hundreds of years later, King Benjamin taught his sons, “For it were not possible that our father, Lehi, could have remembered all these things, to have taught them to his children, except it were for the help of these plates; for he having been taught in the language of the Egyptians therefore he could read these engravings, and teach them to his children, that thereby they could teach them to their children” (Mosiah 1:4). Clearly many significant parallels exist between ways plates were used in antiquity and in the Book of Mormon.

While Finley rewords the old argument about plates in terms of what is known from the Old World, other critics have defined it differently, pointing out that no metal records have been found in the New World. The point is made moot by the fact that the Nephite scribes do not suggest that the use of metal plates was widespread in their culture. While most Nephite writing was probably on perishable materials (Alma 14:8, 14 speaks of records being “burned and destroyed by fire”), just a handful of records are written on metal, specifically on the brass plates of Laban, the small plates of Nephi, the large plates of Nephi, and the abridgment plates of Mormon.⁵⁴ In effect, the plates from which Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon seem to have been unique. Indeed, the use of plates to write large books seems to have been confined to a single family, that of Lehi and Laban.⁵⁵

Finley argues that the volume of materials written on the brass plates of Laban made it “at least awkward to transport them from place

54. The record of Ether was kept on only 24 gold plates and thus is not in the same category as these other, longer texts.

55. Lehi found the genealogy of his fathers on the plates of Laban, whose fathers had kept the record, suggesting that they were closely related (1 Nephi 5:14).

to place,” then contrasts this with the “leather, papyrus, and parchment” used for Bible materials, which were “much more easily transportable and convenient to use. While metal was used in the ancient Near East for writing material, the dissimilarities in usage with the Book of Mormon outweigh the similarity of material” (p. 342). This is like arguing that the tabernacle of Moses, with all of its metal implements, could not have existed because it would have been “awkward to transport” and that archaeological evidence for the existence of stone temples in the ancient Near East suggests that the use of tent-shrines is improbable. As a believer in the Bible, Finley, like us, would reject that argument. Moreover, his argument against the plates of brass seems to be based on the assumption that they were intended to be carried about from place to place. But unlike Moses’ tabernacle, they were not intended to be transported across vast distances.

In his treatment of writing materials used in the ancient Near East, Finley draws attention to the fact that the *Copper Scroll*, the only metal document found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, as well as the small inscribed silver scrolls found in Jerusalem, were rolled up, demonstrating “that the normal form of writing for literary content was on *scrolls*” (p. 341). While we cannot disagree with his conclusion, we find it interesting that he is inconsistent in his argument. Noting that “the two ‘tables of stone’ that Moses received from the Lord contained the Ten Commandments,” he adds that “otherwise, stone was used for monumental inscriptions” (p. 341). When dealing with the Book of Mormon plates, he argues that they must fit the usual pattern, but when it comes to the Bible, he makes an exception for the Ten Commandments. It seems that his religious leanings, like ours, determine how he evaluates evidence.

Hebraisms

Finley’s discussion of Hebraisms, listed in one of John Tvedtnes’s articles, is useful and demonstrates that while Hebraisms might be expected in an English translation from an ancient text (as occasionally with the King James Version of the Bible), they are not necessarily

strong evidence for the Book of Mormon unless they are unattested in the KJV.⁵⁶ Of course, in some cases Finley is merely reinventing the wheel as the discussion of Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon has a long bibliography. He acknowledges that some of the examples “seem more unique to the Book of Mormon” (p. 344) but rejects others on the basis that similar idioms can be found in the KJV. Thanks to searchable computer versions of the scriptures, we are able to find such parallels, making some of us wonder how Joseph Smith managed to do it, especially given his mother’s statement that he was not wont to read books and his wife’s indication that he had no written materials with him during the translation.⁵⁷

Sometimes, one cannot be sure where Finley stands on the issue of Hebraisms. For example, he seems to correct Tvedtnes about the occasional placement of the “relative pronoun” (actually a particle), which “in Hebrew normally directly follows its antecedent noun or noun phrase, just as in English. Sentences like the example he gives from 1 Nephi 17:27 would be rare, though perhaps possible in biblical Hebrew” (p. 344). He then compares the Book of Mormon verse with Jeremiah 37:1, perhaps intending to suggest that Joseph Smith merely borrowed the usage from the KJV, despite the fact that Finley had just said the usage was only “perhaps possible in biblical Hebrew” (p. 344). If it is only “perhaps possible” (which seems to be less certain than “possible”), why then use an example from the KJV that, as Finley notes, “gives the literal order” (p. 345)?

But having provided evidence that the “perhaps possible” Hebrew usage actually exists in the Bible (both in the Hebrew and the KJV English), Finley argues that if 1 Nephi 16:37 were really drawn from a Hebrew text, it would use “and” rather than “who.” We concur that the conjunction would have been a possible reading, but what then do

56. Tvedtnes plans to make a stronger case in one of the chapters of his forthcoming book, *The Book of Mormon and the Ancient World*.

57. For an in-depth discussion, see Gee, “La Trahison des Clercs,” 100–101.

we do with the example from Jeremiah 37:1, which uses “whom” in a similar context, as Finley himself notes (pp. 344–45)?⁵⁸

Finley draws another example, saying, “Tvedtnes’s third example, if translated literally from a Hebrew text, should read, ‘then the-ones-living without God shall confess.’ Mosiah 27:31 has, ‘Then shall they confess, who live without God in the world,’ while the better English form suggested by Tvedtnes is ‘then shall they who live without God in the world confess.’ The degree to which Tvedtnes’s suggested translation and the translation in the Book of Mormon reflect the literal Hebrew appears to be roughly the same” (p. 345). But there is a big difference when one realizes that Hebrew sentences usually begin with the verb. In Hebrew one expects “confess” to appear before the active participle “the-ones-living without God,” and that is precisely how it appears in the Book of Mormon. In this case, Finley has obscured the relevant facts.

Tvedtnes observed (like Sidney B. Sperry before him) that Alma 13:18, which says that Melchizedek “did reign under his father,” should be understood in the sense of the Hebrew word for “under,” which also means “instead of.” Finley dismisses the argument on the grounds that “in English the two prepositions communicate entirely different ideas,” meaning that Joseph Smith’s “translation would fail to communicate properly” (pp. 345–46). Finley not only disallows evidence for Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon but also condemns its improper usage of English terms, making Joseph Smith damned if he did and damned if he didn’t use Hebraisms in his translation.

The most impressive Hebraisms in the Book of Mormon are words that reflect wordplays understandable only in Hebrew and words that are better understood in Hebrew terms than in English due to the range of meaning of the corresponding Hebrew words.⁵⁹ Here are a few examples:

58. Readers confused by my questions should realize that Finley’s argument is confused and confusing.

59. For a discussion of a Hebrew wordplay in Alma 32:21, see John A. Tvedtnes, “Faith and Truth,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 3/2 (1994): 114–17.

- In Alma 49:4, we read that the Lamanites attempted to “cast their stones and their arrows” at the Nephites atop the wall of the city Ammonihah. Alma 49:22 speaks of “the stones and arrows which were *thrown*.” While in English, we would appropriately use the verb “throw” for stones, this is not so for arrows, where we would expect “shoot.” But the Hebrew verb *yrh*, meaning “to throw” or “to cast” (e.g., Exodus 15:4, 25; Joshua 18:6; Job 30:19), also has the meaning of “shoot” for arrows (e.g., Exodus 19:13; 1 Samuel 20:11, 20, 36–37; 2 Kings 13:17; 19:32). Indeed, in 2 Chronicles 26:15, the Hebrew verb (with a variant spelling) is used in the passage rendered “to shoot arrows and great stones” in the King James Version of the Bible.

- In 1 Nephi 1:6, we read that as Lehi “prayed unto the Lord, there came a pillar of fire and *dwelt* upon a rock before him.” The English term “dwelt” normally connotes setting up house or at least staying for a long time, and we would expect to read that the pillar of fire “sat” or “rested” on the rock. Significantly, the Hebrew verb *yšb* means both “dwell” and “sit.” For example, Jacob’s sons “sat down to eat” (Genesis 37:25), but “Israel dwelt in that land” (Genesis 35:22). The same verb is used in both passages.

- In Helaman 9:6, we read that the Nephite judge had been “stabbed by his brother by a *garb* of secrecy.” Critics have contended that this makes no sense in English, since “garb” has the same meaning as “garment” or “clothing.” This idiom is the same as the English “under cloak of secrecy.”⁶⁰ But the Hebrew word *beqed* means both “garment” or “garb” (e.g., Genesis 39:12–13) and “treachery.”⁶¹ This would seem to be a wordplay in the Hebrew original of the Book of Mormon. As for the preposition “by,” in Hebrew its range of meaning includes “in,” “with,” and “by means of.”

- Jacob wrote that Nephi instructed him regarding Nephite sacred preaching, revelations, and prophecies that “I should engraven

60. In 1 Samuel 28:8, we read that “[King] Saul disguised himself, and put on other raiment” so he would not be recognized. See also 1 Kings 22:30 and Joshua 9:2–16.

61. The adjectival and adverbial forms are rendered “treacherous” and “treacherously” in Isaiah 24:16, Jeremiah 12:1, and Zephaniah 3:4.

the *heads* of them upon these plates” (Jacob 1:4). We really expect something more like “most important” to be used here. Indeed, the Hebrew word for the head of the body is sometimes used to describe things as “chief” (Deuteronomy 33:15; Psalm 137:6; Proverbs 1:21; Amos 6:1) or “precious” (Song of Solomon 4:14; Ezekiel 27:22), which seems to be the sense in which Jacob used the word.

- The land of Jershon has a valid Hebrew etymology, *Yershon*, meaning “place of inheritance.” Significantly, it appears in passages that employ the words “inherit” (Alma 27:24) and “inheritance” (Alma 27:22; 35:14). The wordplay makes sense only in Hebrew.

Finley argues against Royal Skousen’s assertion that the Book of Mormon uses the *if-and* construction known from the Hebrew Bible for result clauses, a construction unfamiliar to speakers of English.⁶² He writes that “while Skousen’s observation is interesting, I think it may still be the case that this construction was influenced by the KJV in its original form. The conjunction *and* occurs 51,714 times in the KJV. By comparison, the NIV reduces this by about 40 percent. It is surely a prominent feature of the KJV, and that could have influenced Joseph Smith to use it even in some of his result clauses” (p. 347). The statistics notwithstanding, Finley fails to give even one example of the use of the conjunction in the KJV that matches the examples Skousen listed from the Book of Mormon. Does one even exist in the English Bible? Shepherd seems to have thought so. He also challenges Skousen’s study, claiming that this Hebraic feature is known from the King James Version of Jeremiah 5:1 (p. 503 n. 64). He has, however, misanalyzed the text, which can be diagrammed as follows:

62. See Royal Skousen, “Critical Methodology and the Text of the Book of Mormon,” *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 132–35. Skousen notes that the examples he cites were changed in later editions of the Book of Mormon, with the omission of the word “and,” thus giving the text the appearance of idiomatic English rather than Hebrew. Tvedtnes notes that the omission of “that” before some subordinate clauses in later editions of the Book of Mormon destroyed a Hebrew idiom in the process of making it conform to standard English usage. See John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Background of the Book of Mormon,” in *Rediscovering the Book of Mormon*, ed. John L. Sorenson and Melvin J. Thorne (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1991), 86–87.

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem,
and see now,
and know,
and seek in the broad places thereof,
 if ye can find a man,
 if there be any that executeth judgment,
 that seeketh the truth;
and I will pardon it.

The English antecedent for “it” in the final “and” clause is not “man.” If this were an example of the *if-and* construction discussed by Skousen, we should have “and I will pardon him.”⁶³

Finley also mangles his quotation of 1 Nephi 17:50, which we give here in four different versions to show that Latter-day Saints have consistently and correctly understood the scriptural passage completely different from Finley’s idiosyncratic understanding. For the original manuscript, we provide the context for the *if-and* construction.

Original manuscript: God had commanded me that I should build a ship & I sayeth unto them if [G]od had commanded me to do all things I could do it **if** he should command me that [I] should say unto this water be thou earth & it **shall** be earth & if I should say it it would [b]e done.⁶⁴

Printer’s manuscript: **If** he should command me that I should say unto this water be thou earth it **should** be earth & if I should say it it would be done.⁶⁵

1830 edition: **If** he should command me that I should say unto this water, Be thou earth, it **should** be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

63. The Hebrew text uses the feminine, suggesting that the antecedent is the city Jerusalem.

64. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 144. We have changed the markings to standards for our field and have eliminated some of the diacritics.

65. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer’s Manuscript of the Book of Mormon*, 2 vols. (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 1:120. We have changed the markings to the standard Leiden bracket system and have eliminated some of the diacritics.

1981 edition: **If** he should command me that I should say unto this water, be thou earth, it **should** be earth; and if I should say it, it would be done.

Finley's version: **If** he should command "Say unto this water, be thou earth and it **shall** be earth"; and if I should say it, it would be done (p. 346).

Skousen's point was that the *if-and* construction had been eliminated in the printer's manuscript because it is impossible English. Finley's reformulation of the sentence to eliminate the *if-and* construction does so by eliminating four words of the quotation, "me that I should" (p. 346), which changes the grammatical construction of the sentence significantly. We agree that if those four words were not in the text, Finley's understanding of the construction would be correct. Unfortunately, they are in the text and Finley's understanding of the construction is not superior to Skousen's. Skousen can account for the construction as it stands in the original manuscript, while Finley must emend the text.

In Finley's treatment of Skousen's other examples, he must admit that "these instances more clearly use *and* to introduce the result clause" (p. 347), which is an admission that Skousen is right. Finley argues that because of the ubiquitous use of *and* in the KJV (and almost everything written), Joseph Smith must have randomly thrown in *and* even where it made no sense in English. This can hardly be construed as a coherent, much less a cogent, argument.⁶⁶

66. We wonder how Professor Chaim Rabin, former head of the Hebrew Language Academy in Jerusalem, would have reacted to Finley's comment about the frequent use of the conjunction "and" in the Book of Mormon. In 1971 Tvedtnes received a letter from a friend, Robert F. Smith, who was then attending the Hebrew University in Jerusalem. Smith told of an English lecture on the history of the Hebrew language in which Rabin had cited a passage from the Book of Mormon to illustrate the use of the Hebrew conjunction *waw* and told the assembled students that the Book of Mormon reflected Hebrew better than the English Bible. When Tvedtnes later went to Israel and took courses from Rabin, he found that Rabin had other positive things to say about "Hebraisms" in the Book of Mormon.

Egyptian Characters

Finley's objection to the use of Egyptian characters is that "someone from those who supported Jeremiah would be expected to use Hebrew rather than Egyptian" (p. 351). This is merely an assumption, as is the statement that "it is more likely that the idiom of the KJV, rather than an underlying Hebrew or Egyptian, influenced Joseph Smith" (p. 351).

Finley relegates to a footnote his comments on the use of Egyptian characters in Hebrew inscriptions. He dismisses the use of *Papyrus Amherst 63* as evidence for the Book of Mormon. The text, including a quotation from Psalm 20:2–6, was written in Egyptian demotic script though the language is actually Aramaic, a language closely related to the Hebrew used by the Jews after the Babylonian captivity. Relying on a dating of the second century B.C. assigned to the text by earlier scholars,⁶⁷ he concludes that "it is rather late in relation to the alleged time of Nephi" (p. 493 n. 46). But Gee and Tvedtnes have shown that subsequent scholarship dates the text to the fourth century B.C., considerably closer to Nephi's time.⁶⁸

Book of Mormon Names

Finley also evaluates the essay "Book of Mormon Names Attested in Ancient Hebrew Inscriptions," mentioned earlier in this review.⁶⁹ In that article, we did not address all the issues and evidence relating to Book of Mormon names but focused only on recently attested names in Hebrew inscriptions. We showed that many Book of Mormon names that were once ridiculed and dismissed as shallow, modern creations are now attested in authentic Hebrew inscriptions, most of which predate 587 B.C., a time and context in which they could have been known to Lehi's family.

67. Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes used this date in their article "Jewish and Other Semitic Texts Written in Egyptian Characters," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 5/2 (1996): 160.

68. Gee and Tvedtnes, "Ancient Manuscripts Fit Book of Mormon Pattern."

69. Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper, "Book of Mormon Names."

Finley's response to our article does contain some useful information and not just obfuscation. For example, Finley claims that "it should first be noted that some of the names may not be found directly in the KJV but can easily be derived from it, and they were attested as names used during the time of Joseph Smith. This applies to the names Sam and Josh, which quite plausibly come from Samuel and Joshua. Regardless of whether or not a Hebrew inscription contains one of these names, the derivation from the KJV and a name current with Joseph Smith has to be considered a viable explanation" (p. 353).

Finley's comment misses the mark since the names Sam and Josh and many others were criticized when the Book of Mormon appeared because they sounded modern. The evidence we presented in our article shows that these names are attested in Hebrew inscriptions and are entirely appropriate for Lehi's time.⁷⁰ Finley seems to be aware of only half the problem in attributing the names to a nineteenth-century origin. It is not just a question of how Joseph Smith might have fabricated a few names, but how he could have known that these names would, long after his death, be attested and dated to an appropriate time period consistent with the claims of the Book of Mormon. One must also explain how some Book of Mormon names, though not yet attested in ancient inscriptions, have an etymology consistent with the context in which they are used or appear in that record.

We can, however, agree that, from a scholarly point of view, one must consider all possible explanations. Finley does not seem willing to consider that the ancient Hebrew derivations are a viable possible explanation. It seems that, for those who are convinced a priori that Joseph Smith was a charlatan, no evidence from the ancient Near East is acceptable. For those who accept Joseph as a prophet and the Book of Mormon as authentic ancient scripture, the evidence seems significant. Finley's rejection of this evidence seems ironic when one considers the fact that a paper on "Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon," which Tvedtnes presented at the thirteenth annual World

70. Ibid.

Congress of Jewish Studies in Jerusalem in August 2001, was given a warm reception by the Hebrew scholars in attendance.

Finley offers specific comments about the Book of Mormon names and how they compare with the ones found in ancient Hebrew inscriptions that we have discussed. Of the name Isabel (Alma 39:3), Finley notes that “she was a ‘harlot’ who caused Coriantum [Corianton], the son of Alma, to ‘forsake the ministry.’ While the Isabel mentioned here is not the same as Jezebel, the Phoenician princess who married Jeroboam the son of Nebat (1 Kgs 16:31), the context makes it clear that there is some thematic connection. . . . Surely biblical Jezebel could be the inspiration for Isabel in the Book of Mormon” (pp. 353–54). That approximates our contention, though we must correct Finley by noting that it was King Ahab, son of Omri—not Jeroboam, son of Nebat—who married Jezebel; he has simply misread the Bible text, taking 1 Kings 16:31 in isolation from verse 30.⁷¹

Not wishing to credit Joseph Smith with knowing “what the underlying Hebrew was,” Finley finds another explanation for the name that we demonstrated was known from an ancient Hebrew inscription.⁷² For him, Isabel is merely an early French variant for Elizabeth that came into use in both England and the United States (p. 354). Are we to believe that Joseph Smith was clever enough to compose a fraudulent book (the Book of Mormon) but dumb enough to give himself away by using English names like Sam, Josh, and Isabel? Finley seems to have fallen for the standard anti-Mormon view in which Joseph seems to be cleverly pulling hoaxes while at the same time tripping over his own words.

“As for the name Abish,” writes Finley, “Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper cite the name ʾbš” in two ancient texts, but “their explanation fails to account for the final *aleph* in the name on the cited inscriptions”

71. Alan Goff, “Boats, Beginnings, and Repetitions,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 1 (1992): 67–84, has shown in detail that the repetition of themes in the Bible and Book of Mormon is an argument not against, but for, both texts.

72. Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper, “Book of Mormon Names,” 47, 49.

(p. 355). Actually, we did account for it, and had Finley read more carefully, he would have noted the sidebar that reads,

There is abundant evidence from the inscriptional material that hypocoristic forms sometimes have a suffixed aleph, represented in transliteration by \aleph . Thus we have the biforms $\check{S}bn^{\aleph}$ (biblical Shebna) alongside $\check{S}bnyhw$ (Shebniah), both attested in Hebrew inscriptions. Similarly, the biblical name Ezra (Hebrew $\text{ʿ}zr^{\aleph}$), whose name is borne by one of the books of the Bible, has a final aleph and is hypocoristic for biblical Azariah ($\text{ʿ}zryh$), the name of two biblical kings. The longer form is also known from contemporary inscriptions, as is the form $\text{ʿ}zr$. Neriah (Hebrew $Nryh$), known from the Bible as the name of the father of Jeremiah's scribe Baruch, is attested in inscriptions in both its long form and in the hypocoristic form Nera (Hebrew Nr^{\aleph}). Alongside the biblical name Obadiah ($\text{ʿ}bdyh$), whose hypocoristic form Obed ($\text{ʿ}bd$) is also known in the Bible, the inscriptions have several occurrences of the hypocoristic form $\text{ʿ}bd^{\aleph}$, with suffixed aleph. Also known from the inscriptions are the biblical name Asaiah ($\text{ʿ}syh$) and its hypocoristic form $\text{ʿ}s$. Finally, we have the name Hzd^{\aleph} , hypocoristic for an unattested $Hzdyh$. These facts suggest that Alma, which is written with a final aleph on a document found in Nahal Hever in 1961, may also be hypocoristic.⁷³

We did not invent the concept, which is accepted by other Bible scholars of whose work Finley seems not to be aware. Contrary to his contention, we found the suffixed *aleph* entirely explainable in terms of ancient Hebrew names, as have other scholars before us. In addition to the work of Avigad and Sass, cited above, we should also note that such eminent Semitics scholars as William Foxwell Albright,⁷⁴ Frank Moore Cross

73. Ibid., 50. For a discussion of the hypocoristic nature of names ending in *aleph*, with an extensive listing of examples, see Nahman Avigad and Benjamin Sass, *Corpus of West Semitic Stamp Seals* (Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1997), 471.

74. W. F. Albright, "Northwest Semitic Names in a List of Egyptian Slaves from the Eighteenth Century B.C.," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 74 (1954): 227, and "The Early Alphabetic Inscriptions from Sinai and Their Decipherment," *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 110 (1948): 21 n. 77.

Jr. and David Noel Freedman,⁷⁵ Wolfgang Röllig,⁷⁶ and Frank L. Benz⁷⁷ have discussed what has been called “afformative ‘aleph’” in Hebrew and other Northwest Semitic languages.

Finley’s carelessness is illustrated by his declaration that “*Sariah* (the wife of Lehi[,] and Nephi’s mother), according to some Mormon writers, is the same as the woman named Seraiah or Saryah in an Elephantine papyri of the fifth century B.C.” (p. 358). We know of no one who has claimed that Lehi’s wife lived at Elephantine in Egypt in the fifth century. Rather, the claim, supported by the evidence, is that the name in the Elephantine papyri is identical to that of Lehi’s wife. Finley added that the name *Sariah* “can be compared with the common masculine name *Seraiah* in the KJV” (p. 358). We have made that very comparison in our article and wonder why Finley claims it as his own. If he wants to suggest that the name cannot be used for a woman, we have dealt with that issue as well, even drawing attention to a bulla with *Solomon* as the name of a woman. Also note that the name *Saria* is now known from a fifth-century B.C. Jewish inscription found in the Bosphorus region.⁷⁸

Finley claims that “from all of the preexilic evidence from the Hebrew inscriptions we would expect the name to be spelled with a long ending for the -iah part of it, yielding *Sar-yahu* instead of *Sar-ya*” (p. 358). Finley should carefully examine the references we cited in our footnotes as sources for the Hebrew names. We showed that both the long and short versions of the divine name appear in names on preexilic seals and bullae as well as in the Bible, though the long form has a longer history.

75. Frank Moore Cross Jr. and David Noel Freedman, *Early Hebrew Orthography: A Study of the Epigraphic Evidence* (New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1952), 49.

76. H. Donner and Wolfgang Röllig, *Kanaanäische und Aramäische Inschriften* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1962–79).

77. Frank L. Benz, *Personal Names in the Phoenician and Punic Inscriptions: A Catalog, Grammatical Study and Glossary of Elements* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1972), 240. Benz wrote that the afformative *aleph* is a “hypocoristic termination and mark of abbreviation . . . well attested in Northwest Semitic during the second millennium B.C.”

78. “Institute Scholar Speaks at Congress of Jewish Studies,” *Insights* 21/9 (September 2001): 1.

In his critique of the name Aha, Finley makes some of the same points we made, making us wonder if he really read our comments. He astounded us by noting that “the expression ‘Aha!’ appears 10 times” in the Old Testament (p. 356). Does he think that Joseph Smith sat trying to think up another name, turned to Psalm 35:21, and said, “Aha! That’s what I’m looking for”? (This also does not explain how Joseph Smith was able to know that Aha would be attested in a Hebrew inscription predating Lehi’s day.) Elsewhere, Finley suggests that the Prophet may have taken the name Nahom from “Nachon’s threshingfloor” in 2 Samuel 6:6 or from Naham of 1 Chronicles 4:19 (p. 363).

Finley may be correct in his critique of Nibley’s identification of the Book of Mormon place-name Shazer with Arabic *shajer*. Were we to argue Finley’s case for him, we would point out that the real problem is with the use of two sibilants (*sh* and *z*) consecutively—something that rarely occurs in Semitic languages. Failing to bring this up, Finley argues that “perhaps a more likely source for Shazer was the place name Jazer in the KJV. . . . Note especially Isaiah 16:8, ‘they are come even unto Jazer, they wandered through the wilderness’” (p. 362). This seems to suggest that Joseph Smith went through the Bible looking for obscure names used in connection with the word *wilderness* so he could use the information in the book he was fabricating. Even with searchable electronic versions of the scriptures on the computer, the task would be difficult.

In some cases, Finley simply protests too much. He objects that one cannot know whether the names Alma, Abish, Aha, and Ammonihah would have been written with the Hebrew letter *ayin* or the letter *aleph* (p. 355). In fact, the ancient Hebrew texts to which we referred settle the question for each of these names. Finley does the same with the letter *h* in the names Aha and Nahom: does it represent Hebrew *heh* or *heth* (pp. 356, 363)? Again, the inscriptions we cited answer that question; Finley is much too dismissive of the evidence.⁷⁹

79. In an Internet posting of 10 June 2002, David Wright suggested that the Book of Mormon place-name Nahom “may be Nah- with an -om suffix.” He then argued that “it is consequently not clear whether the place name Nahom (whose root could be nh/nah-given the evidence of the BM onomasticon) is to be associated with the Arabic place name

In his discussion of the name Alma, Finley acknowledges that the name (with initial *aleph* rather than *ayin*) is attested in one of the Bar Kochba letters of the early second century A.D. and at Ebla in the late third millennium B.C. His footnotes draw attention to books written by two scholars outside the Church of Jesus Christ but do not inform his audience that it was Latter-day Saint scholars who first made the tie between those ancient texts and the Book of Mormon. (We repeated the information in our article.) But Finley leans toward “modern potential sources for the name Alma,” such as “the phrase *alma mater* or even the transliterated Hebrew word for ‘virgin’ or ‘young woman,’” noting that “it is quite possible that the young Joseph Smith heard the term in a sermon on Isaiah 7:14 (‘Behold, a virgin [*alma*] shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel’)” (p. 355). Can anyone seriously picture Joseph Smith thinking, “Virgin—now there’s a good name for me to give to my male protagonist”? Is it not more plausible to hold that the reason so many Book of Mormon names have shown up in ancient Hebrew

Nehhem (whose root is *nhm*) in Yemen.” Somehow, he wants to believe that just because -om or -um may be a suffixed element in other Book of Mormon names, it follows that it functions in a similar fashion here, meaning that it cannot be considered equivalent to the Arabic name because they are of different roots (*nh* vs. *nhm*). Wright gives no evidence for this contention, basing his comments on later Nephite names rather than on names known from the ancient Near East. In a footnote, Wright writes as follows: “John Tvedtnes’ article ‘Hebrew Names in the Book of Mormon’ at www.fair-lds.org treats Nahom briefly (p. 3 of the PDF file). He chooses to associate Nahom with Hebrew *n-kh-m*, but wrongly implies that Nehhem in Yemen is the same root. If one associates Nahom with *n-kh-m* (hard-*h*), then one cannot credibly associate it with the different root lying behind Nehhem (*n-h-m*; soft-*h*). As I noted in a post of several months back, Kent Brown seeks to associate both roots in his JBMS article on the Yemenite altar with the gentilic adjective *nhmy* ‘Nehemite’ written on it. This dual association stretches credulity.” But Brown notes, “The exact equivalency of the root letters cannot be assured. It is probable that the term *Nahom* was spelled with the rasped or fricative Hebrew letter for ‘h’ (het or chet) whereas the name *Nihm*, both in modern Arabic and in the ancient Sabaeen dialect, is spelled with a softer, less audible *h* sound. . . . One has to assume, it seems to me, that when the members of Lehi’s party heard the local name for ‘the place that was called Nahom’ they associated the *sound* of that local name with the term *Nahom*, a Hebrew word that was familiar to and had meaning for them.” S. Kent Brown, “‘The Place That Was Called Nahom’: New Light from Ancient Yemen,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 79 n. 3.

texts is due to the historical accuracy of the book rather than to Joseph Smith dreaming up nonsense such as this?

Finley objects to Nibley's suggestion (which he mistakenly attributes to Tvedtnes) that "the form -ihah may be due to Joseph Smith's 'transliteration,'" noting that "forms with -iah also occur in the Book of Mormon (e.g., Sariah and Mosiah)" (p. 356). Finley here has misstated several facts, having confused what we wrote on the name Ammoniah with what Nibley wrote on the subject. In our article, we suggest that the Nephites may have used a longer form of the divine name *Yhwh* (which, the reader will note, has the letter *h* twice), while the Jews used the shorter form *Yh*. Indeed, the names that have the -ihah ending are all from later Nephite history, suggesting that this was a later internal development.

Of the Hebrew name that we identified with the Book of Mormon Ammonihah, Finley notes that "other scholars read it as Imanuyah(u), meaning 'Yahweh is with us' and corresponding to Immanuel, 'God is with us.' The Mormon writers give no evidence for equating the name with Ammonihah rather than the accepted Immanuyah" (p. 356). We acknowledge that other readings are possible for this and other names, due mostly to the fact that the Hebrew names in the inscriptions are all written without vowels. Our vocalization is, however, a possible reading, but nothing can settle this kind of issue. We can say that the door is simply not shut on the authenticity of ancient names in the Book of Mormon.

Similarly, Finley objects to our claim that the Bible name Haggith "may have been vocalized Hagoth anciently." They give no evidence for this assertion" (p. 357). Since the books of the Bible were originally written without vowels, which were added later to the text, we cannot produce the evidence for the vocalization Hagoth, but neither can one demonstrate that the later Bible manuscripts are correct in rendering it Haggith. Another factor that must be considered is linguistic drift, by which pronunciation changes over time. The way the Nephites pronounced a name in the fourth century A.D. may not be the same as the way they and other Israelites pronounced it in the sixth century B.C.—especially the vowels.

We thank Finley for noting one error, namely that the name He-man in the Bible does not begin with the same consonant as *Hmn* on the two Israelite seals. We cannot know whether the initial *h* in the Book of Mormon name Himni represents the Hebrew letter *heth* or the letter *heh*. But Himni has the *-i* suffix of gentile names and could derive from either of the attested Hebrew names. In his discussion of the name Jarom, Finley writes that “from the analogous examples they give in their note, however, the name should be Jarum” (p. 357). But in vocalized Hebrew the vowels *u* and *o* are both denoted by the letter *waw*.

Regarding the Book of Mormon names Mathoni and Mathonihah, which we, like Finley, compared with biblical Mattan and Mattaniah,⁸⁰ Finley draws attention to New Testament Matthew, saying, “it is significant that the only spelling with a /th/ occurs in the New Testament. That reflects the Greek transcription of a name of the same general form as the Old Testament name. The Hebrew form, if indeed it were as early as the time of Nephi, would not have had the sound /th/ in it; the KJV forms with /tt/ are closer to what would be expected from an underlying Hebrew form” (p. 357). That is true only of the later vocalized Hebrew texts, but vowels weren’t written in Nephi’s day. The Hebrew letter *tav* is sometimes transliterated *t*, sometimes *th*, in the KJV Old Testament as well (e.g., Ruth, Jotham, Jonathan). Vocalized Hebrew discloses that the *t* in Mattan and Mattaniah is geminated because of the assimilation of a *nun* to the *tav*. This was clearly understood by the Massoretes of post-New Testament times, who developed the rules for vocalization, but we do not know how it was seen by people in Nephi’s time or by the Nephites of six centuries later who bore the names Mathoni and Mathonihah.

Finley claims that “the vowels on the name *Muloki* (Alma 20:2; 21:11) were almost certainly not part of the name *Mlky* found on a bulla from Jerusalem that dates to about 600 B.C. That name was Malki” (p. 357). Again, however, we are dealing with a language for which vowels were not originally written. It may have been Malki, as Finley says, but that does not necessarily hold for a name used in the Book

80. Tvedtnes, Gee, and Roper, “Book of Mormon Names,” 51.

of Mormon centuries later, when vocalic shifts could have occurred (as they have in various European languages). Indeed, regular patterns are one of the evidences for such shifts, and in Muloki (“Mulekite”), we have the *o* as the last vowel in the stem, just as in other Nephite gentilities, Lamoni (“Lamanite”) and Moroni (“Moronite”).

Finley objects that “the name *Ammon* occurs only as the name of a people. . . . It is never found as a personal name” (p. 356). While we did not discuss that name in our article, we see that Finley here breaks his own rule about deciding whether the Book of Mormon name begins with an *aleph* or an *ayin*. If the latter, then it would clearly be related to the people of that name (Psalm 83:7, as Finley notes). If the former, we must draw attention to “Amon the governor of the city” (1 Kings 22:26; 2 Chronicles 18:25) and the Jewish king of the same name (2 Kings 21:18–19, 23–25; 1 Chronicles 3:14; 2 Chronicles 33:20–23, 25).

Our comparison of the Book of Mormon name Luram with the name Adan-Luram known from eighth century B.C. inscriptions from Syria came under fire from Finley, who objects that “the letter *l* stands for a particle on the front of the verb and marks the name as Aramaic rather than Hebrew.” The name could be Aramaic, but we challenge Finley’s statement that “it seems unlikely that an Aramaic name would turn up among the Lamanites about a thousand years after the alleged migration to the New World” (p. 358). Aramaic, called “Syrian” and “Syriack” in the KJV, is a sister language to Hebrew that was adopted by the Jews during the Babylonian captivity. But educated Jews already used Aramaic a century before Lehi left Jerusalem, as is clear from the story recounted in 2 Kings 18:26 and Isaiah 36:11. Part of the book attributed to Daniel, who was a contemporary of Lehi,⁸¹ is known only in Aramaic, beginning with Daniel 2:4 and going through the end of chapter 7.⁸² The name Luram is a perfectly valid hypocoristic

81. To be sure, some Bible scholars believe Daniel was written much later than the prophet of that name, but evangelical Protestants and Latter-day Saints typically accept it as a contemporary account.

82. For a discussion, see John A. Tvedtnes, “Nebuchadnezzar or Nabonidus? Mistaken Identities in the Book of Daniel,” *Ensign*, September 1986, 54–57.

form, i.e., a name that omits the theophoric element (probably to avoid the too frequent repetition of the name of deity).

Summarizing his discussion of Book of Mormon names, Finley writes that “it is next to impossible to claim with any certainty that a name in an ancient inscription matches one found in a source where the names are transliterated into a different script and no originals are available for comparison” (p. 359). The underlying assumption behind this claim is that no Book of Mormon names are valid for comparison with those found in ancient texts because Joseph Smith left us only the English version of the Book of Mormon. He adds that “the claim of the Mormon writers that the names are not found in the KJV has to be tempered with the fact that many of those names (Sam, Josh, etc.) can be derived rather easily from a name in the KJV” (p. 359). Ironically, he never discusses the evidence we presented that Josh is an attested hypocoristic for Josiah, an Old Testament name. Finley’s approach is based on the a priori assumption that the Book of Mormon is not a translation of an ancient text, meaning that all of it must be explainable only in terms of Joseph Smith’s world. Thus he is able to dismiss some of the evidence by saying that “a few isolated instances of apparent correspondence (certainty is prevented by the lack of vowels for the inscriptional evidence) are most likely accidents of history” (p. 359).

What is the bottom line? At least fifteen nonbiblical Book of Mormon names are now attested in ancient Hebrew inscriptions, fourteen of which date to before 587 B.C. None of these were known or published in Joseph Smith’s day. Many of these are in a hypocoristic form that was criticized as too modern when the Book of Mormon appeared but can now be shown to be acceptable since it was known in ancient Israel from preexilic times. Additionally, non-Hebrew names such as Paanchi and Pahoran (both Egyptian) are also attested.⁸³

83. Though not a name, the word *sheum*, included in a list of grains in Mosiah 9:9, can be compared with the Akkadian *she’um*, denoting grain. Akkadian was spoken in the region from which the Jaredites emigrated to the New World and the word may have been

Then there are as yet unattested Book of Mormon names with valid Hebrew etymologies (e.g., Jershon, discussed earlier).⁸⁴ Here are some examples:

- Zarahemla, “seed of compassion,” designates the city founded by a descendant of the only surviving son of the Jewish king Zedekiah, who was led to the promised land by the hand of the Lord.

- Current editions of the Book of Mormon render a Nephite monetary unit as *shiblum* (Alma 11:16). A study of the printer’s manuscript shows that this was actually *shilum*, which in Hebrew means “payment” or “reward” and is entirely appropriate for the content of Alma 11’s description of the wages of the judges.

The issue of Book of Mormon names concerns not just one or two but a whole complex of elements that deserve careful examination and continued study. Finley would likely argue that all of these are “accidents of history”; yet one wonders how many “accidents of history” one must suggest before the criticism of the nineteenth-century explanation of Book of Mormon names becomes untenable. Our assumption is the opposite of Finley’s: believing that Joseph Smith translated the Book of Mormon from an authentic ancient text and that linguistic and cultural evidence supports this view, we look beyond the English text.

applied to a New World grain with which they were unfamiliar and later adopted by the Nephites by means of the Mulekites.

84. Major articles dealing with Book of Mormon names include Paul Y. Hoskisson, “An Introduction to the Relevance of and a Methodology for a Study of the Proper Names of the Book of Mormon,” in *By Study and Also by Faith*, 2:126–35; Hoskisson, “Book of Mormon Names,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 186–87; John A. Tvedtnes, “Since the Book of Mormon is largely the record of a Hebrew people, is the writing characteristic of the Hebrew language?” I Have a Question, *Ensign*, October 1986, 64–66; Tvedtnes, “What’s in a Name? A Look at the Book of Mormon Onomasticon,” *FARMS Review of Books* 8/2 (1996): 34–42; Stephen D. Ricks and John A. Tvedtnes, “The Hebrew Origin of Some Book of Mormon Place Names,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 6/2 (1997): 255–59. The last several issues of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* have discussed the etymology of specific Book of Mormon names. Irreantum, one of the place-names for which the Book of Mormon gives a meaning (1 Nephi 17:5), is the subject of Finley’s criticism. We recommend the article “Irreantum,” by Paul Y. Hoskisson, Brian M. Hauglid, and John Gee, in the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 11 (2002): 90–93.

Artifacts

Writing of the Liahona, also called a ball or director, Finley notes that “elsewhere this device was called a ‘compass’ (1 Nephi 18:12). The principle behind the compass apparently was first discovered in the twelfth century” (p. 362). We were surprised Finley adopted this old canard long used by critics of the Book of Mormon. The objection raised here fails to note that Nephi at no time suggests that this was a *magnetic* compass! This instrument, used by European mariners only since the twelfth or thirteenth century, derives its name from an English word meaning “round,” because of its circular designation of 360 degrees of arc. (The compass we use for drawing circles is certainly not magnetic.) The Liahona was, indeed, a round object (see 1 Nephi 16:10); hence the name compass is perfectly acceptable. That a magnetic compass was not intended is easily demonstrable by Nephi’s statement that “the pointers which were in the ball . . . did work according to the faith and diligence and heed which we did give unto them” (1 Nephi 16:28; see also v. 29).

Commenting on 1 Nephi 16:18, 21, Finley asserts that “there is no evidence I am aware of for bows made of steel in ancient times. The ‘bow of steel’ mentioned several times in the KJV should actually be a ‘bow of bronze’” (p. 363). This is another long-standing but unwarranted criticism. The English word *steel*, together with the KJV passages regarding the “bow of steel,” did not originally denote carburized iron as it does today. It originally denoted anything hard, and we still use the verbal form “to steel” in the sense of “to harden.” Webster’s 1828 dictionary, which reflects usage in Joseph Smith’s day, defines steel not only as iron mixed with carbon but notes that its derivation is “probably from setting, fixing, hardness.” One of the four meanings of the noun is “extreme hardness; as heads or hearts of steel,” while it is used figuratively of “weapons; particularly, offensive weapons, swords, spears and the like.” One of the meanings of the verbal form is “to make hard or extremely hard.”⁸⁵ So just like the “bow of steel” in

85. Noah Webster, *An American Dictionary of the English Language* (New York: Converse, 1828), 2:81.

the KJV (2 Samuel 22:35; Job 20:24; Psalm 18:34), Nephi's bow may have consisted of a copper alloy like bronze.⁸⁶ However, it is likely that the metal was only one component of the bow. Roland de Vaux argued that the "bronze bow" in the biblical passages "refers to the metal covering of certain bows," sometimes used to reinforce composite bows.⁸⁷

The Geography of 1 Nephi

The latter part of the twentieth century saw a surge of interest in the question of Lehi's trail from Jerusalem to the land he called Bountiful. Finley challenges some of this research. "Using only the details found in the Book of Mormon," he writes, "it is impossible to discern whether [the valley of Lemuel] was located in the western Sinai or in the northwestern part of the Arabian peninsula" (p. 360).⁸⁸ But 1 Nephi makes it clear that, after traveling south-southeast from the valley, keeping "in the borders near the Red Sea" (1 Nephi 16:13–14, 33), Lehi's party turned "nearly eastward" to reach the land they called Bountiful (1 Nephi 17:1). We now know that there is a fertile region in precisely the location where one would expect to find Bountiful (i.e., the Dhofar province of Oman in the southern part of the Arabian peninsula). We also know that Nahom, the name of the place where Ishmael was buried just before the party turned east, is reflected in three inscriptions from the time of Lehi found at precisely the region where Nahom should be located if Lehi traveled through Arabia.⁸⁹

86. The same Hebrew term is also rendered "steel" in Jeremiah 15:12 KJV.

87. Roland de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Volume 1, Social Institutions* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 243. See also the important discussion by William J. Hamblin, "The Bow and Arrow in the Book of Mormon," in *Warfare in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks and William J. Hamblin (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1990), 373–79.

88. One wonders who is the target of Finley's remarks. He seems to be saying that the Sinai peninsula is the most logical setting for the story in 1 Nephi, which is more an argument against modern Book of Mormon scholars than against the Nephite record.

89. Brown, "The Place That Was Called Nahom," 66–68; see S. Kent Brown, "New Light from Arabia on Lehi's Trail," in *Echoes and Evidences of the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 81–83.

Finley claims that “Nephi makes no reference to any countries traversed on this journey, which presumably would have included Moab, Edom, and Sheba if the journey was actually made through Arabia” (p. 360). Not quite. Moab was located in what is today Jordan, east of the Dead Sea, while Edom is immediately on the south of Moabite territory. The people of Moab and Edom were essentially nomadic shepherds in ancient times and Lehi’s party could have easily passed through either territory virtually unnoticed. Even today, one can walk for many days through the region and not see another soul—or at least ensure that no one sees you. If, as many think, Lehi traveled south through the hills of Judah prior to descending to the Arabah Valley that leads to the Red Sea, he would have bypassed Moab altogether and would have traversed only the tip of Edomite territory in the south. The ancient kingdom of Saba⁹⁰ (KJV Sheba) was situated in Yemen and was the most populated region in the Arabian peninsula. But Lehi’s group turned east after burying Ishmael at Nahom, so they would have passed only on the outskirts of Sheba. More to the point, however, is that 1 Nephi is an abridgment that Nephi prepared thirty years after their departure from Jerusalem (2 Nephi 5:28–33). He specifically wrote that “if my people desire to know the more particular part of the history of my people they must search mine other plates” (2 Nephi 5:33), meaning the large plates, which contained a more detailed history.⁹⁰

Finley finds the “three days in the wilderness” of 1 Nephi 2:6 problematic:

Does this mean three days after they arrived at the Red Sea or three days since they left Jerusalem? . . . If the reference is to the time since leaving Jerusalem, then it would be much too short for a journey by foot to the Red Sea. [Eugene] England assumes that Nephi means three days after the party

90. If, as some critics claim, Joseph Smith had access to Bible dictionaries, one might expect that he would have looked at one of the maps and selected place-names published thereon. The fact that the Book of Mormon does not mention Moab, Edom, Sheba, etc., is evidence that Joseph Smith did not consult other materials.

arrived at the Red Sea. This is a possible reading of the passage, but it also means that Nephi did not mention how long the journey from Jerusalem to the Red Sea took. (pp. 360–61)

On foot it takes at least five days to travel from Jerusalem to Elath on the Red Sea, but Hugh Nibley has argued that Lehi must have used pack animals since he took tents with him (1 Nephi 2:4).⁹¹ If the party rode donkeys or camels, the journey would have been considerably faster. It seems to us irrelevant that Nephi omitted details, since the small plates were an abridgment of materials previously recorded on the large plates, which Nephi did not prepare until arriving in the New World (1 Nephi 19:1), at least eight years after the group's departure from Jerusalem. Still, it seems likely that the three-day journey denotes the time it took to arrive at the valley of Lemuel after reaching the borders near the Red Sea. An oasis with a perennial stream running to the Red Sea about seventy miles south of the Jordanian city of Aqaba fits Nephi's description of the journey.⁹² One wonders if Finley considers this to be another of Joseph Smith's lucky guesses.

In his critique of Eugene England's assumption that the term *borders* in 1 Nephi denotes a wadi,⁹³ Finley writes, "England's discussion fails to account for the different prepositions *by* and *in*. . . . Plus, if *borders* means *ravines*, one wonders why Joseph Smith didn't choose a term like *valley* or something that would be more descriptive" (p. 361). However, the Hebrew preposition \beth (*b*) can be (and is, in the KJV) translated either "in" or "by," so the question makes no real sense in terms of Hebrew. Other researchers have suggested that the "borders" of which Nephi wrote were mountains. Anciently, borders tended to be natural barriers (e.g., ravines, shorelines, or mountains). Indeed, the

91. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 55.

92. George D. Potter, "A New Candidate in Arabia for the Valley of Lemuel," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 8/1 (1999): 54–63.

93. Eugene England, "Through the Arabian Desert to a Bountiful Land: Could Joseph Smith Have Known the Way?" in *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds and Charles D. Tate (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft and BYU Religious Studies Center, 1982), 143–56.

KJV often renders the Hebrew word גבול (used in the KJV passages employing “borders” in the examples cited by Finley) as “coast,” a word that, in modern English, is used only for a seashore.⁹⁴ Finley should know this. Rather than ask “why Joseph Smith didn’t choose a term like *valley*,” perhaps we should ask why Nephi didn’t write it. The fact that Joseph correctly reflected the Hebrew term is really evidence in favor of the Book of Mormon. Still, in this, as in some of his other comments about the writings of Hugh Nibley and Eugene England, Finley’s comments are directed toward the researchers rather than toward the object of their research, the Book of Mormon.

Lehi and his family went neither west nor north, but *south* down by the borders of the Red Sea (1 Nephi 2:5).⁹⁵ Recently researchers have identified a plausible site for the valley of Lemuel approximately seventy miles from Aqaba (well within a three-day journey from there whether on camel or on foot). The valley has cliffs suggestive of Lehi’s references to firmness and steadfastness and immovability (1 Nephi 2:10), and it also has a perennial stream, a “continually running” river (1 Nephi 2:9) that has existed there for millennia and that empties into the Red Sea, apparently the only stream known in that region that would fit Nephi’s and Lehi’s descriptions.⁹⁶ Other research indicates that a group traveling in a south-southeast direction from there would have followed or shadowed the spice road along the east-

94. KJV employs the word “coasts” in the New Testament as well, describing territories that do not border on shorelines (e.g., Matthew 2:16; 16:13).

95. In 1842 one critic chided, “Why were they not directed to the Mediterranean Sea, which was so near Jerusalem, instead of being made to perform the long and perilous journey to the borders of the Red Sea? more especially since the voyage through the former would have been shorter by six or seven thousand miles, (no trifling distance,) than the one performed according to the data given. An easterly course from the borders of the Red Sea would have taken them across the Desert of Arabia to the Persian Gulf.” Daniel P. Kidder, *Mormonism and the Mormons: A Historical View of the Rise and Progress of the Sect Self-Styled Latter-day Saints* (New York: Carlton and Lanahan, 1842), 265.

96. How could there be “a valley at the mouth of a river on the border of the Red Sea, where there never was a river for more than 300 miles either way along the shore of the sea[?]” S. Burnet, *The Evangelist* (30 September 1880), cited by Joseph Smith III in *The Spaulding Story Re-examined* (Lamoni, Iowa: Herald Office, 1883), 14. For a detailed description of this site, see Potter, “A New Candidate in Arabia,” 54–63.

ern side of the Red Sea where wells that occasionally provided water are now known to have existed. A site known as *Nhm* is located at the eastward turning of this route precisely as Nephi's account suggests. Although unknown to Joseph Smith, that name is attested as early as the seventh to fifth centuries B.C. in the region. Almost directly eastward of *Nhm* is a "bountiful" region that also fits Nephi's description. Even if Joseph Smith had by some fortuitous chance learned of a fertile region on the southeastern shores of the Arabian Peninsula, the Book of Mormon specifies the characteristics of that region.

- Bountiful was nearly eastward from a place called Nahom (1 Nephi 17:1).
- Terrain and water sources from Nahom eastward apparently permitted reasonable access from the interior deserts to the coast (1 Nephi 17:1–3).
- Bountiful was a fertile region (1 Nephi 17:5–6).
- It was a coastal location (1 Nephi 17:5–6).
- Fruit and wild honey and possibly other food sources were available (1 Nephi 17:5–6; 18:6).
- The availability of fruit (1 Nephi 17:5–6; 18:6) and the plentiful nature of the region suggests the availability of fresh water at this location as well.⁹⁷
- Timber was available that could be used to construct a ship (1 Nephi 18:1).⁹⁸
- A mountain was nearby (1 Nephi 17:7; 18:3).
- Substantial cliffs existed near the ocean from which Nephi's brothers might attempt to throw him into the sea (1 Nephi 17:48).

97. "Here, again, is a blunder of ignorance of known factors. The coastline of the Persian Gulf was utterly inhospitable and barren." Gordon H. Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach? An Examination of the Historical and Scientific Statements of the Book of Mormon* (Chicago: Moody, 1964), 37. As recently as 1985 one critic confidently proclaimed, "Arabia is bountiful in sunshine, petroleum, sand, heat, and fresh air, but certainly not in 'much fruit and also wild honey,' nor has it been since Pleistocene times." Thomas Key, "A Biologist Examines the Book of Mormon," *Journal of the American Scientific Affiliation* 37/2 (1985): 97.

98. For objections to timber, see Fraser, *What Does the Book of Mormon Teach?* 37, and Key, "A Biologist Examines the Book of Mormon," 97.

- Sources of flint (1 Nephi 17:11) and ore (1 Nephi 17:9–10) were available in the region.⁹⁹

- Suitable wind and ocean currents were available to carry a vessel out into the ocean (1 Nephi 18:8–9).¹⁰⁰

Researchers have been able to identify only one location along the whole southeastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula that meets all these criteria. Although subsequent research has suggested modification of some of his arguments, our conclusions agree with those made by Hugh Nibley in his pioneering work fifty years ago on Lehi's desert journey: "It would have been quite as impossible for the most learned man alive in 1830 to have written the book as it was for Joseph Smith. And whoever would account for the Book of Mormon by any theory suggested so far—save one—must completely rule out the first forty pages."¹⁰¹

Too Simple for Words

Finley assumes that everything and anything that could have been known in Joseph Smith's time about the ancient world must have come to his attention, whether by the Prophet reading the relevant material or by listening to preachers' sermons. If this was so, one wonders how it is that no Latter-day Saint scholars noticed the material until a century or more later. Did Joseph Smith have sufficient funds to procure the materials,¹⁰² and was he also able to remember

99. "Although the territory is one that in expanse is comparable to that portion of the United States lying between the Mississippi River and the Atlantic Ocean, yet in all that range of territory there has been no metal discovered that would be suitable for ship construction, except in the *central part* and in the *Sinaitic peninsula*, either of which is hundreds of miles distant from the reputed spot where the vessel was built. And this fact goes far to strengthen the oft repeated assertion that 'the author and proprietor' of the Book of Mormon was illiterate." Samuel W. Traugott, *Mormonism against Itself* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1910), 98. For recently discovered evidence for ore, see Wm. Revell Phillips, "Metals of the Book of Mormon," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 36–41.

100. David L. Clark, "Lehi and El Niño: A Method of Migration," *BYU Studies* 30/3 (1990): 57–65.

101. Nibley, *Lehi in the Desert*, 123.

102. See the discussion in William J. Hamblin, "That Old Black Magic," *FARMS Review of Books* 12/2 (2000): 256–60.

everything he had read in the KJV Bible or heard in a sermon? Was he a charlatan as the critics maintain? Of the scholarly opinions expressed about Joseph Smith, we prefer the assessment given by William Foxwell Albright of Johns Hopkins University in 1966:

I do not for a moment believe that Joseph Smith was trying to mislead anyone; I accept the point of view of a Jewish friend of mine at the University of Utah, that he was a religious genius and that he was quite honest in believing that he really could decipher these ancient texts. But to insist that he did [try to mislead people] is really doing a disservice to the cause of a great church and its gifted founder.¹⁰³

Summary

While Finley and Shepherd clearly insist on a nineteenth-century origin for the Book of Mormon, neither of them deals with the question of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon. According to Finley, “It is not my purpose here to examine the validity either of Joseph Smith’s testimony or of the witnesses” (p. 338). This may have been his way of establishing a scholarly distance, but he seems not to understand that one cannot separate the contents of the Book of Mormon from the declarations of the eyewitnesses, as Terryl L. Givens has recently demonstrated.¹⁰⁴

In their original call for better anti-Mormon attacks by evangelicals, Mosser and Owen wrote as follows about *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon*:¹⁰⁵

It has become common for evangelicals to defer to this book. This is quite disturbing. Many of the authors of this volume

103. William F. Albright, letter to Grant S. Heward, 25 July 1966. A photocopy is in the hands of Boyd Petersen.

104. Terryl L. Givens, *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002). Givens’s book is one of the most insightful examinations of Book of Mormon scholarship to date.

105. Brent L. Metcalfe, ed., *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1993).

(though not all) are thorough-going naturalists. The methodology they sometimes employ to dismantle traditional views of the Book of Mormon could equally be used to attack the Bible. D. P. Wright, one of the contributors to the work, writes, “This, by the way, shows that the conclusions made here about the Book of Mormon cannot be used to funnel Mormons into fundamentalist Christianity. *It is the height of methodological inconsistency to think that critical method of study can be applied to the Book of Mormon and that its results can be accepted while leaving the Bible exempted from critical study.*”¹⁰⁶

The irony is that Mosser and Owen as editors tacitly accept Finley’s and Shepherd’s wholesale adoption of exactly this presumably “disturbing” approach. They have, in addition, almost totally neglected the response by members of the Church of Jesus Christ. Put another way, they do not “respond to contemporary Mormon scholarship.”¹⁰⁷ Instead, they have embraced what they previously described as “the height of methodological inconsistency.” Based on the portion of their book devoted to the Book of Mormon, Mosser and Owen’s original verdicts still stand:

- “There are, contrary to popular evangelical perceptions, legitimate Mormon scholars.”¹⁰⁸
- “Mormon scholars and apologists . . . have, with varying degrees of success, answered most of the usual evangelical criticisms,” and “the issue[s] are] much more complex” than the evangelicals realize.¹⁰⁹
- “Currently there are (as far as we are aware) no books from an evangelical perspective that responsibly interact with contemporary LDS scholarly and apologetic writings.”¹¹⁰

106. Mosser and Owen, “Losing the Battle,” 203 n. 109, emphasis added.

107. *Ibid.*, 204.

108. *Ibid.*, 180.

109. *Ibid.*

110. *Ibid.*, 181.

- “At the academic level evangelicals are . . . losing the debate with the Mormons.”¹¹¹
- “Most involved in the counter-cult movement lack the skills and training [in ancient history and in things pertaining to the Church of Christ] necessary to answer Mormon scholarly apologetic.”¹¹²

Appendix: KJV Language

We maintain that the language of the King James Bible played an important role in Joseph Smith’s translation of the Book of Mormon not because he “plagiarized” from the Bible (as some critics maintain), but because the Bible was a crucial part of his cultural and linguistic heritage. The same could be said of other nineteenth- and early twentieth-century translators. For example, in the following chart we compare the work of two different translators, Robert H. Charles¹¹³ and Howard C. Kee,¹¹⁴ each of whom translated the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Charles’s work was published in 1913; Kee’s appeared seventy years later. While both are considered excellent translations, Charles chose to follow the biblical style of the Kings James Version, while Kee used more modern terminology.¹¹⁵

111. Ibid.

112. Ibid.

113. R. H. Charles, *The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament in English* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1913), 2:282–367.

114. Howard C. Kee, “Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983), 1:775–828.

115. Two recent translators, H. W. Hollander and M. de Jonge, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs: A Commentary* (Leiden: Brill, 1985), have, in some cases, preferred to use the KJV style in their English translation. Wherever they have used the same words as Charles and the KJV, an asterisk appears by Charles’s translation.

| Charles | Kee | KJV |
|--|---|---|
| *reserved for eternal punishment (<i>T. Reuben</i> 5:5) | destined for eternal punishment (<i>T. Reuben</i> 5:5) | reserved unto judgment (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 1:6) |
| *lusted after (<i>T. Reuben</i> 5:6) | filled with desire (<i>T. Reuben</i> 5:6) | lust after (1 Corinthians 10:6; Revelation 18:14) |
| *the Mighty One of Israel (<i>T. Simeon</i> 6:5) | the Great One in Israel (<i>T. Simeon</i> 6:5) | the mighty One of Israel (Isaiah 1:24; 30:29) |
| thrones and dominions (<i>T. Levi</i> 3:8) | thrones and authorities (<i>T. Levi</i> 3:8) | thrones, or dominions (Colossians 1:16) |
| *the fashion of the gentiles (<i>T. Levi</i> 8:14) | the gentile model (<i>T. Levi</i> 8:14) | the fashion of this world (1 Corinthians 7:31) |
| laid waste (<i>T. Levi</i> 16:4) | razed to the ground (<i>T. Levi</i> 16:4) | [“lay/laid waste” very common; “rase” only in Psalm 137:7] |
| *filthy lucre (<i>T. Judah</i> 16:1) | sordid greed (<i>T. Judah</i> 16:1) | filthy lucre (1 Timothy 3:3, 8; Titus 1:7; 1 Peter 5:2) |
| written upon the hearts of men (<i>T. Judah</i> 20:3) | written in the affections of man (<i>T. Judah</i> 20:3) | I will . . . write it in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33); write them upon the table of thine heart (Proverbs 3:3) |
| *to offer Him the firstfruits (<i>T. Judah</i> 21:5) | to present as offerings (<i>T. Judah</i> 21:5) | [“firstfruits” very common] |
| them that have familiar spirits (<i>T. Judah</i> 23:1) | ventriloquists (<i>T. Judah</i> 23:1) | them that have familiar spirits (Leviticus 19:31; 20:6; Isaiah 19:3) |
| *And from your root shall arise a stem; And from it shall grow up the rod of righteousness unto the Gentiles (<i>T. Judah</i> 24:5–6) | and from your root will arise the Shoot, and through it will arise the rod of righteousness for the nations (<i>T. Judah</i> 24:6) | And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: . . . And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek (Isaiah 11:1, 10) |

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| <p>*singleness of eye (<i>T. Issachar</i> 3:4)</p> | <p>singleness of vision (<i>T. Issachar</i> 3:5)</p> | <p>thine eye is single (Luke 11:34; Matthew 6:22)</p> |
| <p>*singleness of your heart (<i>T. Issachar</i> 4:1; 7:7)</p> | <p>integrity of heart (<i>T. Issachar</i> 4:1); sincerity of heart (<i>T. Issachar</i> 7:7)</p> | <p>singleness of heart (Acts 2:46; Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22)</p> |
| <p>bowels of mercy (<i>T. Zebulon</i> 7:3)</p> | <p>merciful in your inner self (<i>T. Zebulon</i> 7:3)</p> | <p>bowels and mercies (Philippians 2:1)</p> |
| <p>we were all scattered unto the ends of the earth (<i>T. Naphtali</i> 6:7)</p> | <p>we were all dispersed, even to the outer limits (<i>T. Naphtali</i> 6:7)</p> | <p>["the ends of the earth" used in passages relating to scattering (Isaiah 26:15) and gathering (Isaiah 43:6; Micah 5:4) of Israel]</p> |
| <p>*it stirreth him up (<i>T. Gad</i> 4:4)</p> | <p>he conspires (<i>T. Gad</i> 4:4)</p> | <p>stir him up (Numbers 24:9; Job 41:10; Song of Solomon 2:7; 3:5; 8:4; 2 Peter 1:13)</p> |
| <p>*true repentance after a godly sort (<i>T. Gad</i> 5:7)</p> | <p>for according to God's truth, repentance destroys disobedience (<i>T. Gad</i> 5:7)</p> | <p>for godly sorrow worketh repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10)</p> |
| <p>*abstaineth from meats (<i>T. Asher</i> 2:8)</p> | <p>is abstemious in his eating (<i>T. Asher</i> 2:8)</p> | <p>to abstain from meats (1 Timothy 4:3)</p> |
| <p>beguile me (<i>T. Joseph</i> 6:2)</p> | <p>lead me astray (<i>T. Joseph</i> 6:2)</p> | <p>beguiled me (Genesis 3:13; 29:25)</p> |
| <p>*let this suffice me (<i>T. Joseph</i> 7:6)</p> | <p>that is enough (<i>T. Joseph</i> 7:6)</p> | <p>let it suffice (Deuteronomy 3:26; Ezekiel 44:6; 45:9)</p> |

EVIL: A REAL PROBLEM FOR EVANGELICALS

Blake T. Ostler

In one of his contributions to *The New Mormon Challenge*, “Can the Real Problem of Evil Be Solved?” Carl Mosser (an evangelical graduate student at the University of St. Andrews, St. Mary’s College) argues that, far from resolving what he calls the real problem of evil, the Latter-day Saint view of God exacerbates the problem. He concludes that (1) the Latter-day Saint view does not resolve the real problem of evil, and (2) the Latter-day Saint God cannot simply eliminate evil at will, and therefore evil remains a problem even for God. The real problem of evil, according to Mosser, is not the incompatibility of God’s goodness and power with the existence of evil, but the fact that there is any real evil at all. Mosser distinguishes the real problem of evil from what he calls the merely intellectual problem of evil. The intellectual problem of evil, according to Mosser, is not a real problem but merely a “puzzle to be solved,” arising from the view that if an all-powerful and perfectly good being has created a world that contains what merely *appears to be* evil, then that is

Review of Carl Mosser. “Can the Real Problem of Evil Be Solved?” in *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 212–18. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002. 535 pp., with glossary and indexes. \$21.99.

inconsistent with an omnipotent God's existence (p. 213). Just how there can be a real problem of evil, where a *real* evil exists to be overcome by God's omnipotence and also a world that contains what merely appears to be evil but truly is not, Mosser never addresses or explains.

Is There a Problem of Evil?

Mosser maintains that there really isn't a problem of evil at all. First, he asserts that Alvin Plantinga has resolved the logical problem of evil that arises from the inconsistency among the notions that (1) God is a perfectly good being who would create a world without any genuine evil if he could; (2) God is an omniscient and all-powerful being who can create a world without genuine evil; and yet (3) genuine evil exists. For this problem to arise, the notion of genuine evil must be grasped. Genuine evil is an act or event the nature of which is such that the world would be better, all things considered, had it not occurred. It is evil that is not justified because it is not a necessary condition to obtain a greater good. Given this understanding of genuine evil, these propositions constitute an inconsistent triad.

So has Plantinga resolved the logical problem of evil? In the view of perhaps most analytic philosophers of religion, Plantinga has successfully answered the logical problem of evil *as it was presented by John Mackie*, who argued that God could create persons who always do what is right.¹ Plantinga has shown that if persons have libertarian free will, God cannot create persons and bring it about that they always do what is right.² However, Plantinga has not shown that (1), (2), and (3) are consistent. He argues that every apparent evil, for all that we know, may be justified by a greater good such as free will. Thus Plantinga rejects (3) by claiming that we are not in a position

1. John L. Mackie, "Evil and Omnipotence," *Mind*, n.s., 64 (1955): 200–212. See Daniel Howard-Snyder, introduction to *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. Daniel Howard-Snyder (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), xii–xiii.

2. Alvin Plantinga, *The Nature of Necessity* (1974; reprint, Oxford: Clarendon, 1992), 164–95.

to make “all things considered” judgments.³ It is just logically possible that every instance of evil may result from free acts of others, and, for all we know, God may be justified in not overriding the free decisions of creatures given his purposes.

Does this response constitute a defeat of the logical problem of evil? Hardly. First, Plantinga’s response does not exonerate the compatibilist position that has been the majority view held by credal Christians since the time of Augustine. Plantinga’s defense assumes the libertarian view of free will, which holds that free will is incompatible with an act being caused. Compatibilists believe that free will is compatible with an act being caused.⁴ Further, Plantinga has not shown that God is constrained by logic to create morally irresponsible persons such as we are if he creates *ex nihilo*. Plantinga assumes that God must create morally fallible persons if he creates them free. However, that is not true given the evangelical view of creation *ex nihilo*, for if God creates *ex nihilo*, then he can create any persons that it is logically possible to create. He certainly could have created more morally sensitive and rational persons than we are.⁵ Richard Swinburne has argued that a perfectly rational being is necessarily good.⁶ There is no logical reason that God could not have created perfectly rational beings who are perfectly good even though they are free to choose evil if they wish. If Swinburne is correct, the fact that a person always rationally chooses to do what is right is not incompatible with libertarian free will. Given the credal view, there

3. Alvin Plantinga, *Warranted Christian Belief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 464–84; and “Epistemic Probability and Evil,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 69–96. The same point is made by William P. Alston, “The Inductive Argument from Evil and the Human Cognitive Condition,” in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 97–125.

4. James F. Sennett, “The Free Will Defense and Determinism,” *Faith and Philosophy* 8/3 (1991): 340–53.

5. For a technical treatment of this issue, see Ben Huff, “Contingency in Classical Creation: Problems with Plantinga’s Free-Will Defense,” *Element: An E-Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology*, www.nd.edu/~rpotter/huff_element1-1.html, available as recently as 17 March 2003.

6. Richard Swinburne, *The Coherence of Theism*, rev. ed. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 182–88.

is no reason that God could not have created perfectly rational persons who would always see by the light of reason that choosing what is right is the most rational course. Thus God had open to him the possibility of creating more intelligent and morally sensitive creatures who would bring about less evil than we do through our sheer irrationality. God is thus morally indictable for having created creatures who bring about more evil than other creatures he could have created from nothing.

Further, Plantinga explains natural evils by arguing that it is logically possible that God created devils free in a libertarian sense and with enough power to bring about earthquakes, tornadoes, diseases, cancer, and so forth. But how does God's creating beings he foreknows will freely bring about vast amounts of evil get him off the hook for natural evils? It seems that creating devils and then granting them enough power to interfere with the natural order of things is itself an instance of evil. There is no logically necessary reason that God would have to grant devils such power to wreak havoc with the natural order and thereby to bring about vast amounts of suffering. Far from constituting a defense of the problem of evil, Plantinga has simply given a scenario that is an instance of divine culpability for natural evil.⁷

Mosser also maintains that no one has stated a successful evidential problem of evil. The evidential problem of evil argues that, given the types and sheer magnitude of evils that we experience, it is *probable* that events occur, which, all things considered, the world would be better off if they had not occurred. Whereas the logical problem of evil relies on deductive logic, the evidential problem of evil relies on inductive evidence to establish the claim that *probably* the types and amounts of evil that we actually experience are inconsistent with God's existence. Certain events are so overwhelmingly, crushingly evil that

7. See David L. Paulsen and Blake T. Ostler, "Sin, Suffering, and Soul-Making: Joseph Smith on the Problem of Evil," in *Revelation, Reason, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2002), 237–84.

we cannot begin to fathom how they could be necessary for a greater good; our every attempt to explain them is either inadequate or morally unacceptable. The circumstance of a little girl in Detroit being raped multiple times and then brutally tortured, beaten, and murdered by her mother's boyfriend, or the days of pain of a fawn burned in a forest fire, seem to be actual instances of such inexplicable evils.⁸

The problem with the evidential problem of evil is that humans may well not be in a position to make the kinds of probability judgments required.⁹ Can we really discern accurately whether God could have reasons for the types and amounts of evils we experience? However, such a view seems to confuse the fact that while there is much that we don't know, it doesn't follow that what we do know cannot support such probability judgments. We are in a position to know that we cannot begin to fathom any greater good that is accomplished by such evils. We can also see that any explanation we come up with is either inadequate, because we cannot see that such evils are necessary to accomplish the greater good, or repulsive, because our explanations are themselves morally reprehensible. Thus the evidential problem of evil is precisely that, so far as we can see, a God such as is described in the creeds cannot exist while there are also genuine evils. Yet there appear to be genuine evils. Thus we are justified in concluding that, so far as we can see, the God of the creeds cannot exist. Thus the evidential problem of evil is not decisive, but it presents a problem for those who trust their experience as veridical. On the grounds that it is morally insensitive and fails to grasp the nature of the challenge such

8. See William L. Rowe, "The Problem of Evil and Some Varieties of Atheism," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 1–11; Bruce Russell, "Defenseless," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 193–205; Richard M. Gale, "Some Difficulties in Theistic Treatments of Evil," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 206–18; and William L. Rowe, "The Evidential Argument from Evil: A Second Look," in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, 262–85.

9. See Plantinga, "Epistemic Probability and Evil," 69–96; and Alston, "The Inductive Argument from Evil," 97–125.

evils present for the evangelical view of God, I also vehemently reject Mosser's characterization of such evils as a mere "puzzle to be solved."

Does Mormonism Resolve the Problem of Evil?

Mosser admits that Mormonism does in fact solve the intellectual problem of evil—that is, the logical and evidential problems of evil: "The Mormon concept of God can provide an apparently quick and easy solution to the intellectual problem of evil by denying God's omnipotence and that he is a Creator [*ex nihilo*]" (p. 217). Of course, such a concession does not concede much since Mosser believes that the intellectual problem has been solved by Plantinga. In addition, Mosser argues—correctly, in my view—that limiting God's power buys a solution to the problem of evil at too high a price *if the sole explanation for evil is that God does not have enough power to prevent the evils that actually occur*. For example, God could have seen what Hitler was up to and have eliminated him, even without omnipotence. God had the power to prevent such evils because, on the Latter-day Saint view, he had at least the power of a human, and a human standing near Hitler could have killed him. Mosser contends that if Latter-day Saints argue that God must have had his reasons for not preventing evils which mere humans have the power to eliminate, "they are using a strategy for answering the problem of evil long employed by classical theists, and it is difficult to see the advantage of Mormon finitism" (p. 215).

However, Mosser has overlooked the fact that God need not employ such strategies if he is omnipotent in the sense accepted by evangelicals. Latter-day Saints do not employ the same strategy as creedal Christians because it makes sense on the Latter-day Saint view to say that God must create an environment conducive to the growth of intelligences as they actually are. It makes no sense within the context of creedal Christianity to limit God in this way because he can simply create any persons he wants out of nothing. The God of the creeds could have created a world that is free of any evil whatsoever. He could have created persons who were already

morally superior in a world without any natural evils. He could have created already morally advanced creatures who did not require the extreme conditions we encounter in this life as a basis for growth. However, such soul-making strategies work within the Latter-day Saint worldview precisely because God cannot create out of nothing just the persons he wants. In Mormonism, God's goal is to assist us to advance by confronting *genuine* challenges to aid our growth and learning. Unlike the God of the creeds, the God of Latter-day Saint belief did not create intelligences or determine their level of advancement and moral sensitivity. He takes us as we are and lovingly works with us from there. God can have reasons to allow evils—even genuine evils—on the Latter-day Saint view because he must bring about conditions conducive to the growth and advancement of persons like us. Things may occur that do not make the world, all things considered, better than it would have been had they not occurred. It is not better, all things considered, that a little girl be raped and murdered. However, the fact that such acts *can occur*, that genuine evils are *possible*, is necessary to God's plan where persons are genuinely free. If God intervened every time someone were about to bring about a genuine evil, he would frustrate his purposes for us. For example, if knives were steel-hard when spreading butter but suddenly turned to rubber whenever a person wanted to use a knife to stab another person, the natural order necessary for God's plan to be accomplished would be frustrated. There would not even be the possibility of morally significant free actions in such an environment.

Thus Latter-day Saints have strategies available to them to resolve the problem of evil that are not available to creedal Christians—even if a lack of divine power is not the reason for such a solution. Indeed, I have argued elsewhere that, on the Latter-day Saint view, God has “maximal power”—or all the power that it is consistently conceivable for a God to have in relation to a real world having a real history and a real social environment that includes free persons.¹⁰

10. See Blake T. Ostler, *Exploring Mormon Thought: The Attributes of God* (Salt Lake City: Kofford Books, 2001), chap. 4.

Mosser's Argument against the Latter-day Saint Solution

Mosser offers two reasons why he feels that even though Latter-day Saint doctrines “can solve the intellectual problem” of evil, such a solution is nevertheless bought at “two high costs” (p. 215). First, a part of the LDS answer to evil is that “there is an opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). Thus it appears that the actuality of evil is built into the structure of reality. Second, Mosser argues that a part of some LDS theodicies is that God is limited by an intractable chaos that he organizes into an ordered cosmos. Mosser explains that because on the LDS view God is constrained by the “inviolability of the freewill” of other beings and because of the “uncreated laws of nature” and the “intractableness of eternal matter,” Latter-day Saints can consistently argue that “some evils occur that God is simply powerless to prevent” (p. 214). Thus he concludes that evil will never be overcome according to the Latter-day Saint view because if “evil is in part due to the inherent nature of matter, then God simply cannot overcome it” (p. 216). He asserts that this is the real problem of evil because the Bible views God as decisively eliminating evil at the end of time through his omnipotent power.

Mosser claims that the notion of opposition in all things “is simply unfounded.” He disposes of this doctrine with a quotation from John Kekes: “Whatever is true of phenomena requiring contrasting aspects, it is not true of good and evil. It is absurd to suppose that there can be kindness only if there is cruelty, or freedom only if there is tyranny” (p. 215). Now it is true that we do not need to be unkind in order to be kind; however, it does not follow that we could know and appreciate what kindness is unless we had some idea of what it would be like for persons not to be kind. In the Book of Mormon, the ancient Hebrew prophet Lehi teaches that, in order to appreciate our experience of good, we must be capable of recognizing evil. Thus his point seems to be that opposition is essential to our *knowledge* of both good and evil (an epistemological issue), not that every good *always* requires an offsetting evil to exist (an ontological issue). As Lehi states:

If Adam had not transgressed . . . he would have remained in the garden of Eden. And all things which were created must have remained in the same state in which they were after they were created; and they must have remained forever, and had no end. And they would have had no children; wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, *having no joy, for they knew no misery; doing no good, for they knew no sin*. But behold, all things have been done in the wisdom of him who knoweth all things. Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy. (2 Nephi 2:22–25)

A similar point is made in the Book of Moses, where God tells Adam, “Inasmuch as thy children are conceived in sin, even so when they begin to grow up, sin conceiveth in their hearts, and they taste the bitter, *that they may know to prize the good*” (Moses 6:55). The point is that tasting the bitterness of evil in the world affords us an opportunity to know and learn to prize what otherwise we could not appreciate.

Moreover, there is also an ontological dimension to “opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11) in addition to the epistemological dimension. There are virtues that require opposition in order to be realized. Lehi argues that God’s purpose in creating humankind was to make it possible for us to know joy. As a condition to experiencing this joy, it is necessary to be able to choose between good and evil and to experience both bitter and sweet. While it is not necessary to be unkind to be kind, it is necessary to have genuine choices among good and evil alternatives to be free in a morally significant sense. Indeed, F. R. Tennant has argued that our concept of good has meaning only when related to concepts such as temptation, courage, and compassion.¹¹ Courage is developed through facing real challenges, compassion comes about as a response to the presence of pain and suffering, and temptation exists only where there is the possibility of choosing evil. As Hugh McCann argues:

11. F. R. Tennant, *Philosophical Theology* (London: Cambridge, 1928), 1:188–89.

True virtue has to be tested and refined. Someone with the virtue of patience must have tasted affliction and disappointment, and seen things through; the courageous person has to have endured danger and risk; the compassionate must have struggled with temptation, sorrow and hardship. The point of such experiences is not merely to strengthen our tendency to act rightly. . . . [Virtue] requires that we know trial and suffering, and human weakness in the face of them, in the only way they truly can be known: through experience. . . . In short, true virtue requires knowledge of good and evil—not just as they are manifested in our own struggle with sin, but as they are played out in the travail of the whole world. As we gain this knowledge, we become more suited for God’s friendship.¹²

It is significant that Lehi’s discussion of opposition in all things occurs in the context of agency as a necessary condition to allow individuals to be agents who can choose for themselves. The point of opposition in all things is not that we must be evil to be good, but that in order to be moral agents in any significant sense we must be capable of choosing between good and evil. If we were capable only of good acts, we might be innocent, but we could not be moral agents. Thus it is not the *actuality* of evil that is necessary but the possibility that persons can make significant choices. There are no significant choices if we are not moral agents in the sense that we can freely choose either good or evil.

Thus Mosser has misunderstood the thrust of the doctrine of opposition in all things. His argument works only if the actuality of evil is built into the world, not its mere possibility. Mosser argues that the doctrine of opposition in all things makes the existence of evil a “necessary” feature of the world (p. 216). However, the doctrine of

12. Hugh J. McCann, “Divine Providence,” in *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta (2001), at plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2001/entries/providence-divine/ as of 17 March 2003.

opposition in all things implies only that the *possibility* of evil is necessary to a world designed to function as an environment of personal growth. Moreover, Mosser himself must accept that evil is a necessary possibility within the world, for he accepts Plantinga's free-will defense. The prominent feature of the free-will defense is that God cannot create a world containing free creatures and guarantee that there is no evil. Even omnipotence cannot guarantee that there are both significantly free creatures and no evil.

This last point is also significant because it shows that Mosser's claimed advantage for his omnipotent God who could rid the world of evil by the exercise of omnipotence is illusory if God also chooses to have free creatures. Moreover, if persons remain free, God cannot guarantee that all evil will be eliminated as Mosser claims. Indeed, I would guess that Mosser rejects the doctrine of universal salvation. If so, he cannot consistently adopt his own argument against Mormonism, for there will always exist the evil that some persons will remain in an unsaved condition. Moreover, it seems to me that such a possibility is built into the very structure of the nature of love. If what God seeks with us is a truly loving relationship, God cannot unilaterally guarantee by his power that we will return his love with our own reciprocating love. For love cannot be coerced, forced, or intimidated into being by sheer power. Any love that is worthy of the name leaves the beloved free to choose whether to enter the relationship and, once in it, whether to maintain the relationship. God cannot coerce our love. Omnipotence is simply irrelevant to what is really valuable in our relationship with God—mutual and reciprocal love that respects the dignity and freedom of the beloved. It is the very nature of love that makes libertarian free will valuable in the first place. Mosser may envision a God who exists all alone before creation without any relationships with others, but the living God is a person who seeks our love in return for his. Such love is a good so great that it justifies leaving us free despite the evil we may cause by the use of such freedom. Mosser's solution to what he calls the real problem of evil cannot be adopted consistently with his adherence to the free-will defense.

Further, is chaos really intractable in Latter-day Saint thought in the sense that it constrains God's will? Hardly. God speaks; chaos hears and obeys God's will.¹³ Mosser argues that we should see chaos as fundamentally evil and thus the creation out of chaos in Latter-day Saint thought is inconsistent with the assertion in Genesis that God's creation is good (p. 216). However, Mosser's argument misunderstands the LDS (and biblical view) twice over. First, God did not declare the creation "good" until after he had finished creating it by organizing it. It is not good until it is organized. The very structure of the biblical narrative presents God as working with chaotic powers that he subdues by organizing the chaos into a good creation. Second, chaos is not evil in Latter-day Saint thought—it just is. The point of referring to the eternal environment in which God lives is that it is necessary that natural laws arise when matter is ordered. God cannot have water that is not H₂O, nor can he have water that supports human life but does not cause humans to drown when they inhale it. There is nothing inherently evil about chaos or eternal matter any more than there is something inherently evil about natural laws. Indeed, such laws are a necessary condition to any environment that could act as an arena of soul-building. If there were no regularities, we could not learn from our experience.

Further, whereas Mosser envisions the kingdom of God as being brought about by God's unilateral power, Latter-day Saints expect the kingdom of God to be brought about through our love for God. Only when we truly do the will of God freely will his kingdom reign. The kingdom is not brought about by coercive power, but by loving persuasion. The kingdom of God is not found in the sky but inside of us. If the kingdom is not drawn from our loving hearts and our willingness to do God's will on earth as it is done in heaven, his kingdom cannot come.

But what shall we say if Mosser is somehow correct that God could once and for all eliminate evil from the world by his omnipotence? It

13. *Lectures on Faith* 1.22.

seems to me that God is indictable for not doing so right now if he can. If God can really do as Mosser says—if he can really create a kingdom without evil immediately by merely willing to do so—then what possible justification could he have for allowing the kinds of evil we experience? God could save everyone by simply willing it—given Mosser’s assumptions—but he apparently desires some people to go to hell. Whence then evil? Mosser gives us a God who leaves us in the midst of evil when there is no possible justification for doing so. Is this God really a serious contender for the title of the God of love? Should we worship sheer power in the place of the living God?

OF SIMPLICITY, OVERSIMPLIFICATION, AND MONOTHEISM

Barry R. Bickmore

It is often necessary when making a case against a substantially different theological tradition to simplify the subject for the sake of brevity and clarity. Care must be taken, however, not to oversimplify to the extent that the arguments advanced are meaningless in the context of the more complex reality. Unfortunately, in his essay “Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness,” Paul Owen falls into the trap of oversimplification. This is not to say that he advances no cogent arguments; in truth, most of the issues Owen oversimplifies have often been similarly treated by Latter-day Saints. Therefore, we can assume that his arguments were made in good faith and treat them with respect. Whatever his motivation, the net effect of Owen’s approach is to make Latter-day Saint beliefs seem less plausible than they really are to readers uninformed about the subtleties of Latter-day Saint doctrine.

Review of Paul Owen. “Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness.” In *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement*, ed. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, 271–314. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002. 535 pp., with glossary and indexes. \$21.99.

In this review, I point out areas in which Owen has oversimplified Latter-day Saint beliefs, and I also examine issues that divide Latter-day Saints and evangelicals regarding “monotheism.” Then I show briefly that “Mormon monotheism” is very similar to that preached by the earliest Christians.

The Unity and Plurality of God

Owen’s first self-confessed oversimplification is set out in his introduction, and it in fact governs his entire presentation: “To put it simply, Christians believe that God is one, whereas the Latter-day Saints believe that God is more than one” (p. 272). Aware of the problematic nature of this statement, he adds the following in a footnote:

I am well aware that the above statement is oversimplified. Christians also believe that the three *persons* of the Trinity share God’s eternal divine Being, whereas Mormons acknowledge that God is “one” in the sense of there being one *Godhead* that rules over this earth. Some Mormons believe that God is one in an even stronger ontological sense and deny that there are other Gods beyond the God of this earth. Nevertheless, I think it a safe generalization to say that Christians largely emphasize God’s oneness in conversations with Latter-day Saints, whereas Latter-day Saints *tend* to emphasize the doctrine of a plurality of Gods for apologetic purposes. (p. 467 n. 1)¹

However, in practice, Owen ignores this caveat and crafts his argument on the basis of the assumption that Latter-day Saint the-

1. This illustrates to me the problem of defining one’s own position in negative terms. In my experience, evangelicals tend to speak to Latter-day Saints about the divine unity as if we were pagan polytheists, and Latter-day Saints tend to speak to evangelicals as if they were modalists. Sadly, neither party typically does anything to disabuse the other of its false notions. Latter-day Saints *emphasize* the plurality of God and evangelicals *emphasize* unity. However, the fact that people often talk past each other is no excuse for someone who knows better (such as Owen) to perpetuate the situation.

ism is essentially no different than pagan polytheism. “It is my hope that—rather than understanding Christ’s divine status within the polytheistic context of a pantheon—members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints may come to embrace Christ as the incarnate revelation of the One God” (p. 314).

The plain fact is that both Latter-day Saint Christians and Christians in the creedal tradition believe God is one *and* more than one. Both parties believe that there is one God composed of more than one person. For example, Owen writes:

One of the most theologically enlightening allusions to Deuteronomy 6:4 is found in 1 Corinthians 8:4–6: “We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that *there is no God but one*. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many ‘gods’ and many ‘lords’), yet for us there is but *one God*, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but *one Lord*, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live” (emphasis added). What is interesting here is the way the Jewish Shema was reinterpreted by the early Christians in order to include both the Father (one God) and the Son (one Lord). . . .

What this adaptation of Deuteronomy 6:4 shows is that in the early decades of the first century, Jewish Christians were including Jesus within the unique identity of Israel’s “One God” without acknowledging any breach of biblical monotheism. (pp. 285–86)

So what? Since Latter-day Saints believe everything in the above statement, why waste the space to make this an issue? If the point concerns which aspect of God should be *emphasized*, then we are wrangling over semantics. The real difference between Latter-day Saints and creedal Christians on this score is *how* more than one “person” can be “one God.” They believe that the divine unity is a “oneness of being,” while we do not. Since, even in his caveat, Owen

oversimplifies the subject, I will describe three ways in which Latter-day Saints believe that there is only one God.

First, there is only one God because the Father is the supreme monarch of our universe. There is no other God to whom we could switch our allegiance, and there never will be such a being. He is “the Eternal God of all other gods” (D&C 121:32). Elder Boyd K. Packer writes:

The Father *is* the one true God. This thing is certain: no one will ever ascend above Him; no one will ever replace Him. Nor will anything ever change the relationship that we, His literal offspring, have with Him. He is Elohim, the Father. He is God; of Him there *is* only one. We revere our Father and our God; we *worship* Him.²

Second, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are so unified in mind, will, love, and covenant that they can collectively be called “one God” (see 2 Nephi 31:21; D&C 20:28). A powerful unity of spirit, the universal “light of Christ” that is the power of God pervading the universe (D&C 88:7–13), bonds them. Jesus Christ can even be identified by the title “Father” because “I am in the Father, and the Father in me, and the Father and I are one—The Father because he gave me of his fulness, and the Son because I was in the world and made flesh my tabernacle, and dwelt among the sons of men” (D&C 93:3–4). Elder Bruce R. McConkie explained: “Monotheism is the doctrine or belief that there is but one God. If this is properly interpreted to mean that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost—each of whom is a separate and distinct godly personage—are one God, meaning one Godhead, then true saints are monotheists.”³

Third, even though an innumerable host of beings may be gods and though many more will become such, there is still only one God because all of them are unified in essentially the same way as the

2. Boyd K. Packer, *Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1991), 293, emphasis in original.

3. Bruce R. McConkie, “Monotheism,” in *Mormon Doctrine*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1966), 511.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Therefore, the fact that the Father has a father and that his sons and daughters may be deified has no particular bearing on the question of whether there is one God. Brigham Young said:

If men are faithful, the time will come when they will possess the power and the knowledge to obtain, organize, bring into existence, and own. “What, of themselves, independent of their Creator?” No. But they and their Creator will always be one, they will always be of one heart and of one mind, working and operating together; for whatsoever the Father doeth so doeth the son, and so they continue throughout all their operations to all eternity.⁴

President Young also said the following: “When will we become entirely independent? Never, though we are as independent in our spheres as the Gods of eternity are in theirs.”⁵ “Then will be given to us that which we now only seem to own, and we will be forever one with the Father and the Son, and not until then.”⁶ “Is he one? Yes. Is his trinity one? Yes. Is his organization one? Are the heavens one? Yes.”⁷ “Gods exist, and we had better strive to be prepared to be one with them.”⁸

Orson Pratt echoed this sentiment:

If, then, the one hundred and forty-four thousand are to have the name of God inscribed on their foreheads, will it be simply a plaything, a something that has no meaning? or will it mean that which the inscriptions specify?—that they are indeed Gods—one with the Father and one with the Son; as the Father and Son are one, and both of them called Gods, so will all His children be one with the Father and the Son, and they

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4. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 2:304.
 5. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 8:190.
 6. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 9:106.
 7. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:92.
 8. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 7:238.

will be one so far as carrying out the great purposes of Jehovah is concerned. No divisions will be there but a complete oneness; not a oneness in person but a perfect oneness in action in the creation, redemption, and glorification of worlds.⁹

John Taylor said, “We may be influenced and directed from above, being united with the Gods in heaven we may become one in all things upon the earth, and afterwards one in the heavens.”¹⁰

In short, Mormonism includes any number of separate persons within the one God “without acknowledging any breach of biblical monotheism.” As Levi Edgar Young wrote, “‘Mormonism’ holds to the doctrine of God as given in the Old and New Testaments of the Jewish scriptures, namely: the monotheistic conception of the Deity, and the divinity of man.”¹¹ While we believe in the existence of many separate beings who are correctly termed “Gods,” in a very real sense they are all one.

The Names of God

Since the 1916 First Presidency statement on “The Father and the Son,”¹² Latter-day Saints have typically separated the name-titles Elohim and Jehovah, using them to refer to the Father and Son respectively. Because this differs markedly from creedal Christian usage, Latter-day Saint scholars and apologists have naturally been interested in the works of scholars outside their own tradition, such as those of Margaret Barker, who argue that the two were distinguished as the High God (El, or Elyon) and his primary agent (Yahweh, or Jehovah) in the original Israelite religion. Barker also argues that Christianity

9. Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 14:243.

10. John Taylor, in *Journal of Discourses*, 19:305.

11. Levi Edgar Young, “Mormonism,” *Improvement Era*, July 1911, 830.

12. “The Father and the Son: A Doctrinal Exposition by the First Presidency and the Twelve,” in *Messages of the First Presidency*, ed. James R. Clark (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1971), 5:23–34 (30 June 1916); also reprinted as “The Father and the Son,” *Ensign*, April 2002, 13–18.

sprang from a strain of Judaism that retained this distinction.¹³ Owen takes issue with Latter-day Saint use of Barker's work because her reconstruction of Israelite history is based on the premise that later editors reworked much of the Old Testament text to be more "monotheistic"—and this to an extent that might make many Latter-day Saints uncomfortable (pp. 303, 312–13). Elohim and Jehovah seem to be identified with one another in many passages of the present biblical text as exemplified in the extant manuscripts.

Here again, Owen oversimplifies the issue, as have many Latter-day Saints. The fact is that informed Latter-day Saints see Elohim and Jehovah as divine name-titles that are *usually* applied to specific members of the Godhead but can sometimes be applied to any or all of them. In contrast, Doctrine and Covenants 109:4, 34 addresses the Father as Jehovah, but Doctrine and Covenants 110:3–4 has this:

His eyes were as a flame of fire; the hair of his head was white like the pure snow; his countenance shone above the brightness of the sun; and his voice was as the sound of the rushing of great waters, even the voice of Jehovah, saying: I am the first and the last; I am he who liveth, I am he who was slain; I am your advocate with the Father.

Joseph Smith also wrote, "Thou eternal, omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent Jehovah—God—Thou Eloheim, that sittest, as saith the Psalmist, 'enthroned in heaven,' look down upon Thy servant Joseph at this time; and let faith on the name of Thy Son Jesus Christ . . . be conferred upon him."¹⁴ Obviously, the names Jehovah and Elohim were used by Joseph Smith to denote specific persons in some instances and as generic titles for any member of the Godhead in others. Brigham Young continued this usage, as demonstrated by the following quotations: "It is true that the earth was organized by three

13. See Margaret Barker, *The Great Angel: A Study of Israel's Second God* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster, 1992). See also Kevin Christensen, "A Response to Paul Owen's Comments on Margaret Barker," *FARMS Review of Books* 14/1–2 (2002): 193–221.

14. *History of the Church*, 5:127.

distinct characters, namely, Eloheim, Jehovah, and Michael.”¹⁵ “We obey the Lord, Him who is called Jehovah, the Great I AM, I am a man of war, Eloheim, etc.”¹⁶ Elder Franklin D. Richards made the following two statements within months of each other. “The Savior said He could call to His help more than twelve legions of angels; more than the Roman hosts; but He knowing the great purposes of Jehovah could go like a lamb to the slaughter.”¹⁷ “We learn that our Savior was born of a woman, and He was named Jesus the Christ. His name when He was a spiritual being, during the first half of the existence of the earth, before He was made flesh and blood, was Jehovah.”¹⁸

The use of the name Jehovah as a generic title became much less common after 1916 but can be noted in the following passages. President David O. McKay spoke of “Jehovah and His Son, Jesus Christ.”¹⁹ According to Joseph Fielding Smith, “The Father and the Son appeared to [Joseph Smith] and settled the question of the nature of

15. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 1:51. Some might object that this statement refers to President Young’s “Adam-God” teachings, so the identity of Jehovah is ambiguous. See Boyd Kirkland, “Elohim and Jehovah in Mormonism and the Bible,” *Dialogue* 19/1 (1986): 77–93. I argue that Brigham Young identified Jehovah with Jesus Christ on this basis. First, in the following passage President Young identified Jesus (“the prince of peace”) as “I am that I am” (Jehovah) and “the God of Jacob.” “I know that we are but a handful of people—Jacob is small, but who can contend with the God of Jacob? He is ‘a man of war,’ and ‘the prince of peace,’ ‘I am that I am.’” *Journal of Discourses*, 10:357. Second, in Brigham Young’s statement it is clear that there were three main players in the creation—Elohim, Jehovah, and Michael. Which one of these was Jesus Christ? I could quote any number of passages from every Latter-day Saint standard work to show that Jesus Christ was the Creator of the world; but so that the reader will be convinced that Brigham Young was aware of this fact, I submit the following: “God chose, elected, or ordained, Jesus Christ, his son, to be the Creator, governor, Saviour, and judge of the world.” Brigham Young and Willard Richards, “Election and Reprobation,” *Millennial Star* 1/9 (January 1841): 218. Similar statements were made in Young’s presence by George Q. Cannon, in *Journal of Discourses*, 11:98, and Orson Pratt, in *Journal of Discourses*, 18:290 and 19:316–17, among others. If Brigham Young did not mean to equate “Yahovah” with Jesus Christ, then he was effectively expelling Jesus from the “executive council on creation,” so to speak.

16. Brigham Young, in *Journal of Discourses*, 12:99.

17. Franklin D. Richards, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:172.

18. Franklin D. Richards, in *Journal of Discourses*, 26:300.

19. David O. McKay, *Church News*, 1 July 1961, 14.

God for all time. . . . It was the true and living God, Jehovah—the God of Israel.”²⁰ President George Albert Smith declared: “We confidently believe that our Father in heaven has spoken in this day and age. . . . We believe that Jehovah has the same feeling towards us, the same influence over us that he had for and over his children who lived in this world in times that are past.”²¹

“However,” Rodney Turner explains, “it may be that virtually all names, titles, and epithets are shared by the Father and the Son. To the extent that this proves the case, they are indeed, one, for shared honors implies shared activities and attainments.”²² Glenn Pearson and Reid Bankhead write:

There are many names for Deity. Probably most of them could be used for either the Father or the Son. In the LDS Church we frequently refer to our Heavenly Father by the name of *Elohim* when we want to be sure there is no mistake about the identity of the person about whom we are talking. In the same manner and for the same reasons, we commonly call Jesus *Jehovah*. The use of the word *Elohim* in this manner is arbitrary, and the name *Jehovah* could just as well be applied to the Father as to the Son. However, it is true that the personage who identified himself as Jehovah was usually, if not always, Jesus. But since he was always acting on behalf of the Father, he could have been using a name that applied as well to the Father as to the Son. *Jehovah* is probably the first person, singular, present form of the verb *to be* in the Hebrew language. Most likely it simply means “I AM.”²³

20. Joseph Fielding Smith, “The Faith of Our Fathers as Expressed in Their Worship of the Living God,” *Improvement Era*, August 1923, 929.

21. George Albert Smith, “Some Points of ‘Peculiarity,’” *Improvement Era*, March 1949, 137.

22. Rodney Turner, “The Doctrine of the Firstborn and Only Begotten,” in *The Pearl of Great Price: Revelations from God*, ed. H. Donl Peterson and Charles D. Tate Jr. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1989), 103.

23. Glenn L. Pearson and Reid E. Bankhead, *Building Faith with the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1986), 126–27.

This nuanced description of Latter-day Saint usage of the divine name-titles places the issue in an entirely different light. That is, Latter-day Saints have no problem whatever in reconciling our position to biblical statements that conflate Elohim with Jehovah. On the other hand, we would expect to find instances where these name-titles are separated to designate the Father (Elohim) and the Son (Jehovah). However, to my mind, such instances would be somewhat problematic for creedal Christians, who do not expect the distinction. If nothing else, such usage would be a bit awkward in the context of creedal Christian theology.

One instance of such a separation that has already been mentioned is Paul's reinterpretation of the Shema in 1 Corinthians 8: "Hear, O Israel: The Lord [Jehovah] our God [Elohim] is one Lord [Jehovah]" (Deuteronomy 6:4). "But to us there is but one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we in him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, and we by him" (1 Corinthians 8:6). ("Lord" is the translation of the Greek *kyrios*, which was the gloss for Jehovah in the Greek Old Testament and Greek New Testament quotations of the Old Testament.)

A second instance is found in the Septuagint (LXX) and Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls versions of Deuteronomy 32:8–9:

When the Most High parcelled out the nations, when he dispersed all mankind, he laid down the boundaries of every people according to the number of the sons of God; but the Lord's [Jehovah's] share was his own people, Jacob was his allotted portion. (Deuteronomy 32:8–9 New English Bible)

The Hebrew text (Masoretic text, or MT) substitutes "sons of Israel" for "sons of God," and the Greek LXX substitutes "angels of God." Barker explains:

This text shows two things: that there was some reason for altering sons of God to sons of Israel, or vice versa (the Qumran reading suggests that the earlier Hebrew had read "sons of God"); and that the sons of God were the patron deities of

the various nations. Elyon the High God had allocated the nations to the various sons of God; one of these sons was Yahweh to whom Israel had been allocated (Deut. 32:9).²⁴

Owen disputes this interpretation of the passage in his critique of the work of Peter Hayman, who agrees with Barker on this issue. It is certainly possible that Jehovah was not separated from the Most High (Elyon) in this passage,²⁵ but Owen never deals with evidence cited by Barker that her interpretation was a standard early Christian reading of the passage. For instance, consider the following quotation from the early Jewish Christian work, the *(Pseudo)Clementine Recognitions*, a fourth-century text based on a second-century source document.

For the Most High God, who alone holds the power of all things, has divided all the nations of the earth into seventy-two parts, and over these He hath appointed angels as princes. But to the one among the archangels who is greatest, was committed the government of those who, before all others, received the worship and knowledge of the Most High God. . . . Thus the princes of the several nations are called gods. But Christ is God of princes, who is Judge of all.²⁶

24. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 5–6.

25. On the other hand, Owen makes the following admission in a footnote: “Admittedly, Deuteronomy 32:8–9 comes close to a monarchistic/henotheistic outlook, since YHWH is depicted as the national God of Israel alone. However, the affirmation that it is YHWH/the Most High who *delivered the nations over* to these other ‘sons of God’ pushes in the direction of monotheism, since Israel’s God is still ultimately in authority over all the nations” (p. 479 n. 135). This illustrates how Owen juggles terminology to fit his agenda: If the Bible has the Most High ruling over other gods or “sons of God,” then this is a manifestation of “monotheism,” and he contrasts “monotheism” with “monarchism.” However, if the Latter-day Saints believe in a Most High God ruling over other gods or “sons of God,” it must be “polytheism.” In contrast to Owen, Larry Hurtado calls the religion of first-century Judaism “monarchial monotheism.” Larry W. Hurtado, “What Do We Mean by ‘First-Century Jewish Monotheism?’” *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (1993): 348–68.

26. *(Pseudo)Clementine Recognitions* 2.42, in *The Ante-Nicene Fathers* (hereafter ANF), ed. Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson (1885; reprint, Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1994), 8:109.

The same sentiment was also expressed by Eusebius of Caesarea in the fourth century:

In these words [Deut. 32:8] surely he names first the Most High God the Supreme God of the Universe, and then as Lord His Word. Whom we call Lord in the second degree after the God of the Universe. And their import is that all the nations and the sons of men, here called sons of Adam, were distributed among the invisible guardians of the nations, that is the angels, by the decision of the Most High God, and His secret counsel unknown to us. Whereas to One beyond comparison with them, the Head and King of the Universe, I mean to Christ Himself, as being the Only-begotten Son, was handed over that part of humanity denominated Jacob and Israel, that is to say, the whole division which has vision and piety.²⁷

Similarly, Owen never deals with Barker's interpretation of Psalm 91. According to Barker, "the text of Ps. 91.9 does actually say: 'You, O Yahweh, are my refuge, You have made Elyon your dwelling place.'"²⁸

What of Owen's assertion that Latter-day Saint apologists should rethink their use of Barker's work because it implies an extremely negative view of the Bible? For instance, Barker hypothesizes that vestiges of early polytheism were removed from the Bible beginning in the reign of Josiah. Owen objects:

If one wishes to follow Barker, it must be assumed that Josiah's reforms had a *negative* influence on the religion of Judah—which is precisely the opposite of what the Bible states: "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses" (2 Kgs 23:25). Furthermore, if one wishes to maintain with Barker that the Deuteronomistic movement had

27. Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel* 4.7, ed. and trans. W. J. Ferrar (New York: Macmillan, 1920), 1:176.

28. Barker, *The Great Angel*, 198–99.

a negative impact on the religious faith of Israel, then one is compelled to reject the teaching of a large body of biblical literature. Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, 1–2 Samuel, 1–2 Kings, large chunks of Isaiah and Jeremiah, as well as other prophetic books were all written or heavily edited (according to this theory) by the Deuteronomists. These writings all promoted the ideals of Second Temple religion, which Barker contrasts with the religion of the First Temple that emerged in a fresh way with the rise of Christianity. It goes without saying that orthodox Christians will be unwilling to reject such a large portion of the Bible—I suspect many members of the LDS Church would likewise be uncomfortable in doing so. Yet it is inconsistent to cite the conclusions of Barker’s study while paying no attention to the arguments and methods used in arriving at those views. (p. 303)

This objection is clearly overstated. Latter-day Saints have always believed that the Bible has been subjected to a certain amount of unauthorized editing, but such a stance has never “compelled” us to throw out entire books that have sustained some changes.²⁹ It is clear that changes *have* been made. Furthermore, Owen never gives an explanation for why Deuteronomy 32:8–9 was emended by scribes to read “sons of Israel” if it was not being interpreted by some Israelites, as Barker suggests. However, in this case I see no need to suppose that all the passages emphasizing monotheism were not in the original documents, since the distinctively Latter-day Saint scriptures contain strong monotheistic statements as well. A shift in emphasis may have taken place that was entirely appropriate, considering the constant battle of Israelite religion with that of polytheistic neighboring cultures. I say more about this issue later in this review, but for now it is enough to note that the Latter-day Saint usage of the divine

29. Kevin Christensen has recently shown that Barker’s view of Old Testament history fits surprisingly well with that of the Book of Mormon. See Kevin Christensen, “Paradigms Regained: A Survey of Margaret Barker’s Scholarship and Its Significance for Mormon Studies,” *FARMS Occasional Papers* 2 (2001): 1–94; cf. Owen, “Monotheism, Mormonism,” 469 nn. 11–12.

name-titles to designate specific members of the Godhead *and* as generic titles for any or all of them is well supported in the Bible and early Christian texts.

Reevaluating the Problem

Acknowledgment of the oversimplifications discussed above narrows the focus of the argument considerably. For instance, it is not cogent to ask *whether* there is one God, but, rather, *how* more than one person can be one God. Also, it has been shown that Latter-day Saints view the Father (as well as the entire Trinity) as unique, at least with respect to our experience. Therefore, it is not relevant to ask *whether* the Bible depicts God as “unique,” but, rather, *how* God is unique.

As I noted above, Owen appears to realize that these are indeed the relevant questions, and some of his arguments touch on these points. However, his relevant arguments are significantly weaker than the irrelevant ones. In the sections that follow, I briefly argue that the answers the earliest Christians would have given to these questions are remarkably similar to the answers given by Latter-day Saints.

Jesus as the Angel of the Lord

A number of scholars have shown that the “Angel of the Lord (Yahweh)” figure in the Old Testament was the basis for New Testament Christology. Of this angel, God said, “Behold, I send an Angel before thee, to keep thee in the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Beware of him, and obey his voice, provoke him not; for he will not pardon your transgressions: for my name is in him” (Exodus 23:20–21). This Angel was distinguished from all others by virtue of the fact that he was the bearer of the divine name Yahweh. This is quite significant; as Charles Gieschen notes, “Because the Name of God is synonymous with his divine nature, the angel or being who has his Name should be regarded as a person possessing his full divine authority and power.”³⁰ Similarly, the Epistle to the

30. Charles A. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology: Antecedents and Early Evidence* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 57.

Hebrews distinguishes Jesus from the angels because he had been given a more excellent *name*: “Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they” (Hebrews 1:4). Jesus prayed to the Father, “I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world” (John 17:6). Paul wrote that God had exalted Jesus “far above . . . every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come” (Ephesians 1:21). Similarly, he wrote, “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philippians 2:9). In John’s vision, Jesus “had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself . . . and his name is called The Word of God. . . . And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:12–13, 16). Similarly, in the writings of Philo of Alexandria (30 B.C.–A.D. 50), “the Logos [Word] is linked with the principal angel of Exod. 23: 20–21 who is said to bear the name of God (e.g. *Quaest. Exod.* 2.13; *De Agr.* 51; *Migr. Abr.* 174).”³¹ The following passage is especially telling:

But if there be any as yet unfit to be called a son of God, let him press to take his place under God’s First-born, the Word, who holds the eldership among the angels, an arch-angel as it were. And many names are his for he is called: the Beginning, the Name of God, His Word, the Man after His Image, and “He that sees”, namely, Israel.³²

(The designation “He that sees” probably refers to Genesis 16:13, which in turn refers specifically to the Angel of the Lord.) A second-century Jewish writer, Ezekiel the Tragedian, also identified “God’s Word” with the Angel of the Lord in Exodus 3:2.³³ Finally, it was the Angel of the Lord who led the children of Israel in the wilderness,

31. Larry W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord: Early Christian Devotion and Ancient Jewish Monotheism*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Clark, 1998), 49.

32. Philo of Alexandria, *De Confusione Linguarum* 146, as cited by Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 109.

33. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 107.

and Paul says that it was Jesus who did this (1 Corinthians 10:4). Much more evidence could be cited,³⁴ but this should be sufficient to show that the identification of Jesus as the Angel of the Lord in the New Testament stands on very solid ground.

This sort of “angel Christology”³⁵ was standard fare in early Christianity and appears to stem from the original Jewish Christianity.³⁶ For instance, the early second-century Jewish Christian pseudepigraphical text *Ascension of Isaiah* has the following description of the Son and Holy Spirit:

Then the angel who conducted me said to me, “Worship this one”; so I worshiped and praised. And the angel said to me, “This is the Lord of all glory whom you have seen.” And while the angel was still speaking, I saw another glorious one, like to him, and the righteous drew near to him, worshiped, and sang praise. . . . And I saw the Lord and the second angel, and they were standing; but the second one whom I saw was on the left of my Lord. And I asked, “Who is this?” and he said to me, “Worship him, for this is the angel of the Holy

34. See especially Barker, *The Great Angel*; Jarl E. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag Freiburg Schweiz, 1995); Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*; Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*.

35. Owen writes: “It is important to distinguish ‘angel Christology,’ which literally identifies Christ as an angel . . . , from ‘angelomorphic Christology,’ which refers to the fact that Christ is sometimes portrayed *visually* in the ‘form’ of an angel” (p. 481 n. 172). This is an important distinction, but I will make the argument below that all nonmodalist Christologies in the pre-Nicene periods were more subordinationist than modern creedal analogues, and there are a number of indications that even though Jesus was distinguished from the angels in the New Testament, there is no sign of a great, unbridgeable “ontological gap” between angels and God in the earliest stratum of Christian thought.

36. For instance, Origen, *De Principiis* 1.3.4, notes that “the Hebrew” interpreted the two seraphim in Isaiah 6:2–3 as Jesus and the Holy Spirit. Ray Pritz connects this Jewish Christian idea to the sect of the Nazarenes, which, he argues, was descended from the original Jerusalem congregation. Ray A. Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity: From the End of the New Testament Period until Its Disappearance in the Fourth Century* (Leiden: Brill, 1988), 10, 22, 108–10.

Spirit.” . . . So my Lord drew near to me, and the angel of the Spirit, and said, “Behold, now it is granted to you to behold God, and on your account is power given to the angel with you.” And I saw how my Lord worshiped, and the *angel of the Holy Spirit*, and how both together praised God.³⁷

An early second-century Jewish Christian document, the Shepherd of Hermas, speaks of “the angel of the prophetic Spirit”³⁸ and Jesus as the “glorious . . . angel” or “most venerable . . . angel.”³⁹ Justin Martyr, a converted philosopher who lived in Rome in the mid-second century, was no Jewish Christian, but Robert M. Grant suggests that in passages like the following, he was influenced by the Jewish Christian writings of Hermas, who lived in the same city.⁴⁰ Justin Martyr wrote that Jesus was “another God and Lord subject to the Maker of all things; who is also called an Angel, . . . distinct from Him who made all things,—numerically, I mean, not (distinct) in will.”⁴¹ He also wrote that the Son is “in the second place, and the prophetic Spirit in the third.”⁴²

A good argument can be made from all this for some unique and essential features of Latter-day Saint Christology. The Angel of the Lord is given the name of God—Jehovah or Yahweh—setting him apart from all angels. This seems to mesh well with Latter-day Saint usage of the divine name-titles, Jesus often being represented as the unique bearer of the name-title Jehovah, which is also ultimately applicable to the Father. Also, the idea that Jesus is an exalted angel is consistent with the Latter-day Saint belief that Gods and angels are gradations of the same species. Further, the designation of Christ as

37. *The Ascension of Isaiah*, in *The Other Bible*, ed. Willis Barnstone (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1984), 528.

38. Shepherd of Hermas, Commandment 11 (ANF 2:28).

39. Jean Daniélou, *The Theology of Jewish Christianity*, trans. and ed. John A. Baker (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964), 119.

40. See Robert M. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God* (Charlottesville, Va.: University Press of Virginia, 1966), 81.

41. Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho* 56 (ANF 1:223).

42. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 13 (ANF 1:167).

an angel seems to imply subordinationism—that is, the doctrine that the Son is subordinate in rank and glory to the Father.

On the other hand, although Owen does not fully develop this line of thought in his essay,⁴³ the link between Jesus and the Angel of the Lord traditions can also be used to make a fair argument for a credal Trinitarian interpretation of the New Testament. Owen writes:

However, a careful analysis of the Angel of the Lord passages reveals that it is quite possible to understand this enigmatic figure as an *earthly appearance* of the one God on specific occasions, rather than as a separate and ontologically subordinate God. In Genesis 16:7–13, the Angel of the Lord who appears to Hagar is specifically identified with Yahweh, not as a second God. . . . The appearance of the Lord to Jacob at Bethel in Genesis 28:13–17 is connected with the figure named the “angel of God” and “the God of Bethel” in 31:11–13. The “man” (i.e. angel) who wrestled with Jacob in Genesis 32:24–28 is identified with the *visible appearance* of God himself in 32:30 (cf. Hos. 12:3–5). Jacob’s blessing of Joseph in Genesis 48:15–16 identifies God with “the Angel.”

Other preexilic traditions likewise seem to identify the Angel of the Lord with the earthly appearance of the Lord, rather than with a separate and ontologically subordinate God. [Owen then cites Exodus 3:2–7; 23:20–23; Judges 6:11–24; 13:3–22; and commentary by Darrell Hannah.]⁴⁴ (pp. 279–80)

While it is true that the Angel of the Lord is sometimes conflated with Yahweh himself, this can just as easily be explained within the context of Mormonism, where the Father and the Son are sometimes conflated (see, for example, D&C 93:3–5). That is, if the Son received the name Jehovah from the Father, in recognition of the investiture

43. Owen’s essential argument is also used by James Patrick Holding, *The Mormon Defenders: How Latter-day Saint Apologists Misinterpret the Bible* (self-published, 2001), 35–52.

44. Darrell D. Hannah, *Michael and Christ: Michael Traditions and Angel Christology in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1999), 20.

of a fulness of divine power and authority, and if Jesus is the one who nearly always appeared as God to men, it would be only natural to refer to the premortal Jesus as Jehovah and to conflate his words and deeds with those of the Father.

Although Owen does not discuss the possibility, it seems natural to ask whether we could agree that the Angel of the Lord at least represents a *distinct person* within the Trinity. After all, even though the Angel and Jehovah are sometimes indistinguishable in the biblical text, sometimes they are distinguished. For instance, in Exodus 23:20–21, God refers to the Angel in the third person. Similarly, Jesus was equated with the Angel by the early Christians, and credal Trinitarians affirm that the Father and the Son are *separate persons* within the One Being of God. In this context, Owen's interpretation of the Angel as the "earthly appearance" of God seems to square well with the New Testament identification of Jesus with "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15; cf. Owen, p. 292).

Furthermore, Owen points out that Jesus was linked in a number of New Testament passages with the figures of the Word and Wisdom of God (pp. 290–93). He quotes James Dunn:

The Wisdom and Word imagery is all of a piece with this—no more distinct beings than the Lord's "arm," no more intermediary beings than God's righteousness and God's glory, but simply vivid personifications, ways of speaking about God in his active involvement with his world and his people.⁴⁵

As has been discussed, such personifications of divine attributes were commonly associated with the more concrete figure of the Angel of the Lord. This sort of background would seem to lend itself to the interpretation that Jesus is somehow part of God's being.

Jarl Fossum and Charles Gieschen appear to promote a similar argument. That is, they connect traditions about Jesus and the Angel of the Lord to traditions about the glory of God, which "could be seen

45. James D. G. Dunn, "Was Christianity a Monotheistic Faith from the Beginning?" *Scottish Journal of Theology* 35 (1982): 320.

as God's hypostasized human form."⁴⁶ This sort of usage of the term *glory* may be implied in some Old Testament texts (see, for example, the vision of God in Ezekiel 1:26–28; cf. Exodus 33:18–23). "And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, . . . and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon it" (Ezekiel 1:26). Again, this seems to fit well with New Testament statements that Jesus is "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15) and that "No man hath seen God [i.e., the Father] at any time" (John 1:18). Furthermore, Philo the Jew and the Christian philosopher Justin Martyr "assert that all the anthropomorphisms in Scripture are to be referred to the Angel of the Lord."⁴⁷ Irenaeus of Lyons (ca. A.D. 180) repeated this teaching,⁴⁸ and it is interesting to note that both Irenaeus and Justin (or Pseudo-Justin) taught that God created man in his *bodily* image.⁴⁹

Problems remain with this interpretation, however. For instance, in Acts 7:55–56 Stephen sees a vision of *both* "the glory of God" and "the Son of man standing on the right hand of God." This implies that God the Father has a visible human form, and this interpretation fits well with the description of Jesus as "the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person" (Hebrews 1:3). In the *Ascension of Isaiah*, Isaiah's spirit leaves his body, and he is taken through the heavens. In the seventh heaven he is shown the Son and Spirit, both described as angels who receive worship, and thereafter he is shown the Father, who is called "the Great Glory."⁵⁰

46. Fossum, *Image of the Invisible God*, 106; cf. 17, 26, 31–34, 95–108; also Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 78–88, 273–76.

47. Fossum, *Image of the Invisible God*, 31 n. 73.

48. See Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 4.7.2–4 (ANF 1:470).

49. See Irenaeus, *Proof of the Apostolic Preaching* 11, in *Ancient Christian Writers: The Works of the Fathers in Translation*, ed. Johannes Quasten and J. C. Plumpe (New York: Newman Press, 1946–present), 16:54; Justin Martyr, *On the Resurrection* 7 (ANF 1:297). Many scholars deny that Justin is responsible for this work, but the authorship of the work attributed to Irenaeus is undisputed. For Justin, see Walter Delius, "Ps. Justin: 'Über die Auferstehung,'" *Theologia Viatorum* 4 (1952): 181–204; for Irenaeus, see Everett Ferguson, ed., *Encyclopedia of Early Christianity* (New York: Garland, 1990), 471–73.

50. For a full discussion, see Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 229–44.

How does this square with the New Testament statements that the Father is “invisible” and has never been seen by man? Jewish Christians appeared to believe that God the Father could not be seen by mortal flesh. For instance, in the *Ascension of Isaiah*, the prophet’s spirit leaves his body, and even then he could not see “the Great Glory” until “the eyes of [his] spirit were open”; after that brief vision, God was not seen again. In contrast, the Son and Spirit were visible continuously.⁵¹ The text known as *1 Enoch* describes God as “the Great Glory” who sits on his heavenly throne and states that “None of the angels was able to come in and see the face of [God]; . . . and no one of the flesh can see him.”⁵² Similarly, the Jewish Christian (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Homilies* gives this explanation:

For I maintain that the eyes of mortals cannot see the incorporeal form of the Father or Son because it is illumined by exceeding great light. . . . For he who sees *God* cannot live. For the excess of light dissolves the flesh of him who sees; unless by the secret power of God the flesh be changed into the nature of light, so that it can see light.⁵³

Incidentally, this seems to be essentially the same explanation given in Latter-day Saint scripture: “And he saw God face to face, and he talked with him, and the glory of God was upon Moses; therefore Moses could endure his presence. . . . [Moses said,] For behold, I could not look upon God, except his glory should come upon me, and I were transfigured before him” (Moses 1:2, 14).

Therefore, while this line of evidence offers some help to credal Trinitarians, it ultimately breaks down. Jesus’ connection with the Word and Wisdom in the New Testament may reflect a simple literary allusion to his role as the means of God’s “active involvement with his world and his people.” After all, does anyone think Jesus is *really* just a personification of some of God’s attributes? On the other

51. *Ascension of Isaiah* 9:36–40, as cited in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 236.

52. *1 Enoch* 14:20–21, as cited in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 87.

53. (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Homilies* 17.16 (ANF 8:322–23).

hand, Latter-day Saint interpretation of New Testament Christology appears to be consistent with the evidence. God the Father, an anthropomorphic being, has given the divine name Jehovah to his Son, who is the earthly manifestation of God. Sometimes the Father and Son are conflated in scripture because of their shared Godhead, but this does not imply “oneness of being.”

Subordination, Oneness, and Divine Simplicity

The Subordination of Divine Attributes and Agents

In the previous section I suggested that the Angel of the Lord might be interpreted as a separate person within the Trinity since, in some passages, he is presented as distinctly separate from God. However, Owen might feel compelled to insist that the Angel and Word/Wisdom are some sort of “personified attributes” of God. As was mentioned, the description of Jesus as an “angel” seems to imply the sort of subordinationism that Latter-day Saints teach, especially if angels are thought to be beings separate from God. Even if a degree of “personification” is granted, these “personifications” are only ever represented as *partial* manifestations of God. Larry Hurtado, professor of New Testament language, literature, and theology at the University of Edinburgh, writes that “the personification of divine attributes was intended to focus attention on particular aspects of God’s nature and (e.g., in Philo) occasionally to magnify God by emphasizing that he is greater than any of his works indicate.”⁵⁴ Equating Jesus with these “personified attributes” would seem to imply that he is less than “fully God.”

The status of the personified attributes is a hotly debated point among scholars, some insisting that they were mere literary metaphors and others that the personifications were thought to have independent reality.⁵⁵ Hurtado has been an energetic defender of the

54. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 49.

55. A good discussion of the debate can be found in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 36–45.

view that personified attributes were mere poetic metaphors in the Jewish literature.⁵⁶ However, he also points out that the personified divine attributes were described in terms identical to those used to describe principal angels or exalted human patriarchs.⁵⁷ These figures were always described as subordinate to God but were distinguished from other heavenly and earthly beings as “bearing more fully . . . the properties associated with divinity. Moreover, the figures emphasized are each described as representing God in a unique capacity and stand in a role second only to God himself, thus being distinct from all the other servants and agents of God.”⁵⁸ However, none of these figures ever gained universal recognition in Jewish circles as second only to God⁵⁹—a fact which led Christians and some Jews, such as Philo, to combine a number of them (the Angel of the Lord, Michael, the Angel Israel, the Name, the Word, Wisdom, etc.) into one intermediary. It appears, therefore, that the New Testament authors used this sort of imagery not to describe the Father and Son as sharing the same being, but to assert Jesus Christ’s position as the principal divine being next to the Father.

Subordinationism in Early Christianity

Owen attempts to sidestep the issue of subordinationism by granting the subordination of the Son and Spirit in a very limited sense:

It should be kept in mind that orthodox Trinitarianism has always been careful to maintain a *functional* subordination of the Son and the Spirit *to the Father*. The Son and the Spirit are included within God’s own identity precisely *as the Son and Spirit of God*. The Son is God because he is all that the Father is (not the other way around). The Spirit is God because in him the presence of the Father and the Son

56. See Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 41–69.

57. *Ibid.*, 17–39.

58. *Ibid.*, 18.

59. *Ibid.*, 19.

is known within the Christian community. The Spirit is the Spirit of the Father and the Son, and he proceeds *from them* (not the other way around). The divine nature that the Son and the Spirit possess is precisely the divine nature of the Father—he remains the reference point. (p. 295)

It is difficult to square Owen's explanation with Christian doctrinal history. The Anglican historian Richard P. C. Hansen observes: "Indeed, until Athanasius began writing, every single theologian, East and West, had postulated some form of Subordinationism. It could, about the year 300, have been described as a fixed part of catholic theology."⁶⁰ And he was not talking just about "functional" subordination. I have already noted subordinationist language in several early Jewish Christian texts and the writings of Justin Martyr, but everywhere we look (aside from modalism) in pre-Nicene Christianity, we find subordinationist Christologies of various sorts.

After all, Jesus said, "My Father is greater than I" (John 14:28), and he asserted that only the Father knows the hour of Christ's second coming (Matthew 24:36). Paul wrote that the Father is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Romans 15:6 New English Bible) and that *after* the resurrection Jesus will "be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:28; see 15:24–27). Hippolytus of Rome wrote that the Father is "the Lord and God and Ruler of all, and even of Christ Himself."⁶¹ Irenaeus referred to John 14:28 and insisted that the Father really does surpass the Son in knowledge.⁶² He also wrote that "the Father, is the only God and Lord, who alone is God and ruler of all."⁶³ Clement of Alexandria taught that while the Father cannot be known, the Son

60. Richard Hansen, "The Achievement of Orthodoxy in the Fourth Century A.D.," in *The Making of Orthodoxy: Essays in Honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. Rowan Williams (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 153.

61. Hippolytus, *Scholia on Daniel* 7.13 (ANF 5:189).

62. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 2.28.8 (ANF 1:402). The same point is made by Peter in (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Recognitions* 10.14 (ANF 8:196).

63. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.9.1 (ANF 1:422). Christopher Stead points out that Irenaeus may have considered the Son and Spirit to be coequal, in harmony with his de-

is the object of knowledge.⁶⁴ Athenagoras spoke of the “diversity in rank” within the Godhead.⁶⁵ Tertullian claimed that there was a time when the Son did not exist with God⁶⁶ and that “the Father is the entire [divine] substance, but the Son is a derivation and portion of the whole.”⁶⁷ Origen labeled Jesus as a “second God.”⁶⁸ Novatian taught that the Holy Spirit is “less than Christ.”⁶⁹ Eusebius of Caesarea called Jesus a “secondary Being.”⁷⁰ By the time of the Council of Nicea (A.D. 325), subordinationism was still the conservative stance. J. N. D. Kelly describes the most numerous group at the council as “the great conservative ‘middle party,’” whose doctrine was that there were three divine persons, “separate in rank and glory but united in harmony of will.”⁷¹

If the original Christian doctrine really was that there are three truly divine persons “separate in rank and glory but united in harmony of will,” this is a stunning vindication of the Latter-day Saint definition of the divine unity. Certainly, many of the writings referred to above express philosophical definitions of God that are foreign to Mormonism, but we can point to “anthropomorphic” Jewish Christians in the early centuries as evidence that the original doctrine of deity was both anthropomorphic and subordinationist.⁷² Can mainstream Trinitarians do the same? Where is the evidence that

scription of the Son and Spirit as “the two hands of God,” “but his image hardly suggests the later view that *all three* Persons are coequal.” Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 157, emphasis in original.

64. See Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata* 4.25 (ANF 2:438).

65. Athenagoras, *Legatio* 10.5, in *The Emergence of Christian Theology*, ed. Eric F. Osborn (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 175.

66. See Tertullian, *Against Hermogenes* 3 (ANF 3:478).

67. Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 9 (ANF 3:603–4).

68. Origen, *Against Celsus* 5.39 (ANF 4:561).

69. Novatian, *Concerning the Trinity* 16 (ANF 5:625).

70. Eusebius, *The Proof of the Gospel* 1.5 (Ferrar trans., 1:26); cf. Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 7.15, trans. Edwin H. Gifford (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 351.

71. J. N. D. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, rev. ed. (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1978), 247–48.

72. David L. Paulsen, “Early Christian Belief in a Corporeal Deity: Origen and Augustine as Reluctant Witnesses,” *Harvard Theological Review* 83 (1990): 111–12; Carl W. Griffin

anyone in the first three centuries believed in three coequal persons in one being? Perhaps this concept was unknowingly embedded in scripture by the first Christians, only to be extracted by later generations. However, assuming that the Holy Spirit had anything to do with revealing the new interpretation, it seems difficult to fathom how this would not constitute a new revelation, such as the New Testament re-interpretation of the Old.⁷³

Divine Simplicity and the Influence of Greek Philosophy

Owen does not deny that at least some of the early Christians and Philo were subordinationists (with respect to Christology and Philo's *Logos* doctrine), but he attributes this to the corrupting influence of Middle Platonist philosophy.

I would not deny that Philo's Middle Platonic views—which presumed God could have no direct contact with the material world—posed certain problems for his monotheistic outlook. Philo described the *Logos* as if it existed on a level *in between* Creator and creation. . . . Nevertheless, because the *Logos* never attained an independent identity in Philo's thought (remaining an emanation from God's own being), his commitment to Jewish principles kept him within the bounds of monotheism. Middle Platonic assumptions caused similar problems for early Christian apologists such as Justin

and David L. Paulsen, "Augustine and the Corporeality of God," *Harvard Theological Review* 95 (2002): 97–118.

73. See Owen Chadwick, *From Bossuet to Newman: The Idea of Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), 195. This point touches on the fascinating subject of "doctrinal development." For good summary discussions of the issue from Catholic and Protestant perspectives, see Aidan Nichols, *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1990); Peter Toon, *The Development of Doctrine in the Church* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1979). For a preliminary foray into the subject from a Latter-day Saint point of view, see Barry R. Bickmore, "Doctrinal Trends in Early Christianity and the Strength of the Mormon Position," found at FAIR Papers, www.fairlds.org/apol/ai180.html, as recently as 17 March 2003.

Martyr and Origen, whose understanding of the Son's identity was similar to Philo's Logos. The tensions remained unresolved until the Nicene fathers clearly identified the Son as a distinguishable relation within God's own substance rather than an emanation from God (so Justin, Origen), or worse, a creature (so Arius). Hence, Nicene theology marked a decisive break with all Platonic and subordinationist views that presumed that the true God could have no direct contact with the physical world. (p. 481 n. 169)

I agree with Owen that the Middle Platonist views dominating Christian theology in the second and third centuries caused many Christians to take their subordinationism too far. For instance, Origen wrote, "We say that the Son and the Holy Spirit excel all created beings to a degree which admits of no comparison, and are themselves excelled by the Father to the same or even greater degree."⁷⁴ In contrast, Jesus was presented as *fully God* in the New Testament (Philippians 2:6). However, it does not follow that all forms of subordinationist Christology were corrupted: I have already pointed out Jewish Christian documents—such as the writings of the Shepherd of Hermas, the *Ascension of Isaiah*, and the (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Recognitions*—which all present Jesus as the principal angelic helper to God but show no trace of significant Middle Platonist influence. Can Owen point out Jewish Christian traditions that were explicitly not subordinationist? Knowing of none, I conclude that Middle Platonism only influenced Christians to take their subordinationist views to extremes.

Owen does not, however, deny that Greek philosophy had some role in shaping "orthodox" Christian theology. Carl Mosser and Owen quote Cambridge scholar Christopher Stead as saying that he resists the charge that "the main structure of Christian orthodoxy was argued

74. Origen, *Commentary on John* 8.25, in *The Early Christian Fathers*, ed. and trans. Henry Bettenson (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 233.

out in a continuous tradition with the aid of philosophical techniques.”⁷⁵ However, Stead contends that the doctrines of God, the Trinity, the incarnation, and “perhaps . . . that of the Creation” are “the product of Christian reflection upon the Scriptures.” He goes on: “It is faith that gives the Christian imagination the power of advancing new perspectives within a continuous tradition of common devotion.”⁷⁶

What Mosser and Owen do not let on is that a large portion of Stead’s book is devoted to showing that when Christianity moved out into the larger hellenized world, there was a shift from a Hebrew concept of God, which was specifically anthropomorphic, to a Greek philosophical concept.⁷⁷ “The Hebrews . . . pictured the God whom

75. Carl Mosser and Paul Owen, review of *How Wide the Divide?* by Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 1–102; see 95.

76. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 89–90.

77. This is the key concept that Latter-day Saint scholars and apologists have pointed to as the most significant corruption due to hellenization. Mosser and Owen, review of *How Wide the Divide?* 82–102, seem to want to saddle Latter-day Saints with the claim that *everything* to do with Greek philosophy must have been bad, which is simply not the case. However, Mosser and Owen’s critique might have some validity if it were true that “the very places in which Latter-day Saint scholars find parallels with Mormonism among certain segments of ancient Christianity are *exactly* where some variety of *Platonism* or some other philosophical school has had the most influence” (p. 89). It has already been pointed out that anthropomorphism was found among Jewish Christians; in fact, the Christian Platonists Origen and Justin both ascribed this belief to the Jews in general (Origen, *Homilies on Genesis* 3.1; Justin, *Dialogue with Trypho* 114, in *ANF* 1:256). Origen believed in the premortal existence of souls but appealed to a Jewish text to make his case (*Commentary on John* 2.25, in *ANF* 9:341), and the Jewish Christian (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Recognitions* (1.28, in *ANF* 8:85) does assert this doctrine. Mosser and Owen point out that Adolph von Harnack thought deification was a Hellenistic corruption (p. 90), but, as will be shown below, this doctrine was taught most explicitly in some forms of Judaism and in the New Testament. Jesuit scholar George Joyce wrote that the early doctrine of deification was regarded “as a point beyond dispute, as one of those fundamentals which no one who calls himself a Christian dreams of denying.” George H. Joyce, *The Catholic Doctrine of Grace* (London: Burns Oates and Washbourne, 1920), 36. Another Jesuit scholar, Henri Rondet, wrote that deification was a doctrine common to both the orthodox and heterodox. Henri Rondet, *The Grace of Christ: A Brief History of the Theology of Grace*, trans. Tad W. Guzie (Westminster, Md.: Newman, 1967), 80. Mosser and Owen, noting that parallels to Latter-day Saint doctrine and practice have been found in gnostic texts, characterize Gnosticism as “Platonism on steroids” (p. 89). However, this ignores recent work showing the deep dependence of gnostic systems on Jewish apocalyptic. As Guy Stroumsa states,

they worshipped as having a body and mind like our own, though transcending humanity in the splendour of his appearance, in his power, his wisdom, and the constancy of his care for his creatures.”⁷⁸ “By saying that God is spiritual [cf. John 4:24], we do not mean that he has no body . . . but rather that he is the source of a mysterious life-giving power and energy that animates the human body, and himself possesses this energy in the fullest measure.”⁷⁹ “In a Palestinian milieu it was still possible to picture the heavenly Father in human form and to see the contrast between heaven and earth as one of light and glory against relative darkness and indignity.”⁸⁰

The Old Testament writers sometimes speak of God as unchanging. . . . In Christian writers influenced by Greek philosophy this doctrine is developed in an absolute metaphysical sense. Hebrew writers are more concrete, and their thinking includes two main points: (1) God has the dignity appropriate to old age, but without its disabilities . . . ; and (2) God is faithful to his covenant promises, even though men break theirs.⁸¹

“One could even say that Gnosticism is Jewish-Christianity run wild.” Guy G. Stroumsa, *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 106. It seems that nearly all the parallels between Latter-day Saint doctrine and practice and those found in early Christian circles can be traced back to Jewish and Jewish Christian influence. This fact is solid historical evidence for Joseph Smith’s claim of a restoration of primitive Christianity. See Barry R. Bickmore, “Mormonism in the Early Jewish Christian Milieu,” in *Proceedings of the First Annual Mormon Apologetics Symposium* (Ben Lomond, Calif.: Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research [FAIR], 1999), 5–32.

78. Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 120.

79. *Ibid.*, 98.

80. *Ibid.*, 188.

81. *Ibid.*, 102. Stead uses the example of Revelation 1:4: “From Him who Is and who Was and who Is to Come’ expresses God’s perpetuity *within* and throughout all ages.” However, he points out that when Christianity became hellenized, “this doctrine came to be developed in an absolute sense which goes well beyond anything that we find in the Bible” (p. 128).

Therefore, when Stead writes that “orthodox” doctrine is part of a “continuous tradition,” he is making a value judgment—that is, he is implying that Hebrew anthropomorphism was not an “essential” doctrine.

The truth is that the mixing of Greek philosophical and Jewish Christian concepts of God catered both to extreme forms of subordinationism and to the Nicene doctrine of three coequal persons in one being. The reason for this is that the God of the philosophers was an absolutely unique and simple being—simple meaning “without parts,” as in the Westminster Confession of Faith. While the Bible does present God as unique in some ways (though not in such an extreme fashion as creedal Trinitarians would like), it nowhere attests any doctrine of divine simplicity. For example, Stead gives evidence that Clement of Alexandria’s and Novatian’s doctrine that God is “simple and not compounded, uniform and wholly alike in himself, being wholly mind and wholly spirit” derives from the Greek philosopher Xenophanes.⁸² The Middle Platonist philosopher Numenius wrote that God “is simple and unchangeable, and in the same idea, and neither willingly departs from its sameness, nor is compelled by any other to depart.”⁸³ If God is absolutely unique and “simple,” then no other beings can be divine in the same sense. Thus the early Christian apologists could speak of Jesus as some sort of emanation from God but not on a par with the one God. Nicene theologians, concerned to preserve the full divinity of Christ, asserted three coequal persons united in one being in such a way that the divine substance is not divided.

This solution is considered a great mystery, beyond human reason. In fact, it is logically incoherent. Latter-day Saints and others have often erroneously charged creedal Trinitarians with logical inconsistency for believing in a tripersonal being. However, the fact that this goes beyond our experience does not mean that there might not be whole planets crawling with tripersonal beings somewhere in

82. Christopher Stead, *Divine Substance* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977), 187–88, quoting Irenaeus.

83. Numenius, quoted by Eusebius, *Preparation for the Gospel* 11.10 (Gifford trans., 566).

the universe. How should we know? The logical inconsistency of the Trinity stems from the dogma of divine simplicity. If, by definition, there can be no divisions within God, how can we consistently say that there are three *distinct* persons within God? No matter how you slice it, some *division* must result. “Orthodox” statements that there can be *separate* or *distinct* persons without *dividing* God in any way are simply theological special pleading.

Subordinationism and Monotheism

Finally we have hit upon the real reason creedal Trinitarians balk at subordinationism. For them, there cannot be more than one being who is truly God, and subordinationism would so clearly provide an instance of *division* within the divine substance that even they could not deny the logical incoherence of their doctrine. On the other hand, Latter-day Saints, along with the biblical writers, do not assert the uniqueness of God in such extreme terms, and they deny any doctrine of divine simplicity. In this framework, there can be any number of truly divine beings who are one with, and subordinate to, God the Father. God can be spoken of as an absolute monarch or a corporate entity.

Yet the Latter-day Saint (and original Christian) doctrine of the divine unity is a legitimate expression of monotheism. Hurtado writes:

Jews were quite willing to imagine beings who bear the divine name within them and can be referred to by one or more of God’s titles (e.g., Yahoel or Melchizedek as *elohim* or, later, Metatron as *yahweh ha-katon*), beings so endowed with divine attributes as to be difficult to distinguish them descriptively from God, beings who are very direct personal extensions of God’s powers and sovereignty. About this, there is clear evidence. This clothing of servants of God with God’s attributes and even his name will seem “theologically very confusing” if we go looking for a “strict monotheism” of relatively modern distinctions of “ontological status” between God and these figures, and expect such distinctions to be

expressed in terms of “attributes and functions.” By such definitions of the term, Greco-Roman Jews seem to have been quite ready to accommodate various divine beings.⁸⁴

Definitions of monotheism must be formed on the basis of the beliefs and practices of those who describe themselves in monotheistic terms. This means that there will likely be varieties within and among monotheistic traditions and that it is inappropriate for historical purposes to impose one definition or to use one definition as a standard of “strict” or “pure” monotheism in a facile manner.⁸⁵

Creatio ex Nihilo

The acceptance by Latter-day Saints of the anthropomorphic God of the Bible requires us to reject the Greek notion of the *absolute* uniqueness of the one God. That God is in some sense unique and that there is a “Creator/creature distinction” are facts taken for granted by Latter-day Saints, but to us this does not imply some unbridgeable “ontological gap.” In support of this interpretation, Latter-day Saints have often pointed to the work of a number of scholars who assert that the doctrine of creation from nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*) was a postbiblical invention. Owen critiques the work of one such scholar, Peter Hayman, but admits, “Hayman correctly notes that God’s unique status is compromised if matter is eternal with him” (p. 296). This subject has been more than adequately covered in Blake Ostler’s review of Paul Copan and William Lane Craig’s chapter in *The New Mormon Challenge*,⁸⁶ but I will briefly comment on

84. Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 364.

85. *Ibid.*, 367.

86. See Blake Ostler, review of “Craftsman or Creator? An Examination of the Mormon Doctrine of Creation and a Defense of *Creatio ex nihilo*,” by Paul Copan and William Lane Craig, available online at www.fairlds.org/apol/TNMC/ as recently as 17 March 2003.

Owen's attack on Hayman's scholarship in this area and the general state of the evidence.

Owen's main objections relevant to this discussion relate to Hayman's use of the rabbinic text *Genesis Rabbah*.⁸⁷ Owen complains:

Unfortunately, *Genesis Rabbah* is cited out of context in the attempt to establish his point. Hayman cites the following statement from *Genesis Rabbah* 1.5 on Genesis 1:1: "R. Huna said, in the name of Bar Qappara: 'If it were not written explicitly in Scripture, it would not be possible to say it: *God created the heaven and the earth*. From what? From *the earth was chaos [tohu]*, etc.'" What Hayman leaves unquoted is the immediately previous sentence, which, in the Soncino edition, reads: "Thus, whoever comes to say that this world was created out of *tohu* and *bohu* and darkness, does he not indeed impair [God's glory]!" The translator notes: "Here, however, they [*tohu* and *bohu*] are regarded, together with darkness, as forms of matter which according to some who deny *creatio ex nihilo* was God's raw material in the creation of the world. *The object of the Midrash here is to refute that view.*" Hayman also ignores *Genesis Rabbah* 1.9 on Genesis 1:1, wherein "a certain philosopher" is told in no uncertain terms by R. Gamaliel that God himself created all the materials from which the world was made, rather than merely being a great artist who was assisted by good materials. (p. 296, Owen's emphasis)

To evaluate Owen's first criticism, let us paste together the two parts of *Genesis Rabbah* 1:5 cited above:

"Thus, whoever comes to say that this world was created out of *tohu* and *bohu* and darkness, does he not indeed impair

87. Owen also argues against examples given by Hayman from the Kabbalah, but these texts are quite late, so I will restrict my discussion to earlier texts more relevant to the issue dividing Latter-day Saints and creedal Christians.

[God's glory]!" "R. Huna said, in the name of Bar Qappara: 'If it were not written explicitly in Scripture, it would not be possible to say it: *God created the heaven and the earth*. From what? From *the earth was chaos [tohu]*, etc.'"

It seems clear (to me, at least) that it is Owen, not Hayman, who has misread this passage. The idea expressed is that the assertion that God created the world from preexisting material would seem to impair God's glory, so if the scripture did not *explicitly teach this*, it would not be possible to say it. Since the Soncino edition of the Midrash was published in 1939, before most of the scholarly work on the origin of the *ex nihilo* doctrine had been produced, it seems natural that the translator would try to spin the meaning of this passage to fit the then-current party line.

In addition, Owen's charge that Hayman "ignores" *Genesis Rabbah* 1:9 is patently false. Hayman writes:

Nearly all recent studies on the origin of the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo* have come to the conclusion that this doctrine is not native to Judaism, is nowhere attested in the Hebrew Bible, and probably arose in Christianity in the second century C.E. in the course of its fierce battle with Gnosticism. The one scholar who continues to maintain that the doctrine is native to Judaism, namely Jonathan Goldstein, thinks that it first appears at the end of the first century C.E., but has recently conceded the weakness of his position in the course of debate with David Winston.⁸⁸

It turns out that the discussion between Goldstein and Winston centers on the very passage from *Genesis Rabbah* that Owen is so concerned about.⁸⁹ Briefly, Winston shows that the particular verb used by the

88. Peter Hayman, "Monotheism—A Misused Word in Jewish Studies?" *Journal of Jewish Studies* 42 (1991): 1–15.

89. Jonathan Goldstein, "The Origins of the Doctrine of Creation ex Nihilo," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 35 (1984): 127–35; Jonathan Goldstein, "Creation ex Nihilo: Recantations

philosopher implied that God had been “actively assisted” by preexistent material in the creation, and Rabbi Gamaliel was responding to that idea, not asserting any strict notion of *creatio ex nihilo*.

Owen’s problem on this score appears to derive from his heavy reliance on the work of Paul Copan.⁹⁰ Copan’s essay in *The New Mormon Challenge* is essentially a repackaging of a previous paper published in *Trinity Journal*.⁹¹ I will offer only one point of criticism regarding Copan’s journal article.

The *Trinity Journal* article is billed as “an examination of Gerhard May’s proposal,” referring to May’s classic book *Creatio ex Nihilo*.⁹² However, Copan persistently refuses to deal with the main line of evidence that May and others have presented. May has convincingly shown that where early texts say that God created out of “nothing” or “non-being,” or some similar translation, they were using a common ancient idiom to say that “something new, something that was not there before, comes into being; whether this something new comes through a change in something that was already there, or whether it is something absolutely new, is beside the question.”⁹³ For instance, the Greek writer Xenophon wrote that parents “bring forth their children out of non-being.”⁹⁴ Philo of Alexandria wrote that Moses and Plato were in agreement in accepting a preexistent material, but also that God brings things “out of nothing into being” or “out of non-being.”⁹⁵ Similarly, even today somebody might ask, “What’s that

and Restatements,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38 (1987): 187–94; David Winston, “Creation ex Nihilo Revisited: A Reply to Jonathan Goldstein,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 37 (1986): 88–91.

90. Owen recommends “the contribution of Paul Copan and William Lane Craig in this volume for a rigorous defense of the biblical and orthodox doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*” (p. 471 n. 26).

91. Paul Copan, “Is *Creatio ex Nihilo* a Post-Biblical Invention? An Examination of Gerhard May’s Proposal,” *Trinity Journal*, n.s., 17 (1996): 77–93.

92. Gerhard May, *Creatio ex Nihilo: The Doctrine of ‘Creation out of Nothing’ in Early Christian Thought*, trans. A. S. Worrall (Edinburgh: Clark, 1994); originally published as *Schöpfung aus dem Nichts* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1978).

93. May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 8.

94. Xenophon, *Memorabilia* 2.2.3, quoted in May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 8.

95. See discussion of Philo in May, *Creatio ex Nihilo*, 9–22.

over there?” The answer given might very well be, “Oh, nothing,” but obviously this would not imply *actual nothingness*. It would simply mean that the object in question is nothing of *consequence*. Therefore, in view of this common usage and the many explicit statements by ancient authors regarding the preexistent matter, we must rule out a belief in *creatio ex nihilo* unless it is explicitly stated otherwise. Such an explicit statement would distinguish itself from the usage common in both the ancient and the modern world.

We do not find viable candidates for such explicit statements anywhere until the mid-second century with the gnostic teacher Basilides and, later, the Christian apologists Tatian and Theophilus of Antioch.⁹⁶ Even as late as the turn of the third century, Tertullian had to take the more ancient usage into account when arguing for the new doctrine. “And even if they were made out of some (previous) matter, as some will have it, they are even thus out of nothing, because they *were* not what they *are*.”⁹⁷

Copan complains that in *The New Mormon Challenge* “May—along with Mormon scholars in general—does little to defend” the claim that “the text of the Bible does not demand belief in creation *ex nihilo*.” He goes on: “While he makes passing reference to certain biblical passages that seem to hint at the doctrine of *creatio ex nihilo*, he does not seriously interact with them, seeming to pass them off lightly” (p. 109). But as has been discussed, May simply points out that the biblical texts that seem to support this doctrine cannot be distinguished from contemporary statements that demonstrably affirm no such thing. Copan never discusses the merits of May’s argument;⁹⁸ rather he indulges in a spate of proof texting, appeals to out-

96. See Frances Young, “‘Creatio ex Nihilo’: A Context for the Emergence of the Christian Doctrine of Creation,” *Scottish Journal of Theology* 44 (1991): 141–42.

97. Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 2.5 (ANF 3:301).

98. I could also mention that Copan nowhere deals with May’s argument as it is extended by others—for example, by David Winston. While Copan *specifically* claims to respond to Gerhard May, he completely ignores May’s primary argument and wrongly accuses May of the same thing he does himself.

dated opinions of scholars, and dogmatic appeals to one particular form of the Big Bang theory.

The bottom line, for the moment, is that the weight of scholarly opinion is on the Latter-day Saint side. There is simply no reason to believe that the Bible requires belief in *creatio ex nihilo* and thus to believe that the Bible requires an unbridgeable ontological gap between Creator and creature.

Deification

The Shrinking “Ontological Gap”

Members of the Church of Jesus Christ and creedal Christians affirm together that Jesus Christ is true God and true man. However, since Latter-day Saints reject the notion of *creatio ex nihilo*, we can also consistently assert that Jesus is subordinate in rank and glory to the Father and was created by the Father.

In support of this idea, I cite early Christian texts that seem to make no distinction between the ontology of Jesus and the angels. For example, Justin made the following controversial statement: “We reverence and worship Him and the Son who came forth from Him and taught us these things, and the host of other good angels who are about Him and are made quite like Him, and the Prophetic Spirit.”⁹⁹ While Father William Jurgens admits that Justin here “apparently [made] insufficient distinction between Christ and the created angels,” he asserts that there “are theological difficulties in the above passage, no doubt. But we wonder if those who make a great deal of these difficulties do not demand of Justin a theological sophistication which a man of his time and background could not rightly be expected to have.”¹⁰⁰ Robert M. Grant writes: “This passage presents us with considerable difficulties. The word ‘other,’ used in relation to

99. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* 6, in William A. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1970), 1:51.

100. Jurgens, *The Faith of the Early Fathers*, 56 n. 1.

the angels, suggests that Jesus himself is an angel.”¹⁰¹ A third-century text called the *Threefold Fruit of the Christian Life* describes Jesus as the angel Yahweh of Hosts: “When the Lord created the angels from the fire he decided to make one of them his son, he whom Isaiah called the Lord [Yahweh] of Hosts.”¹⁰² Methodius of Olympus made a similar statement: “And this was Christ, a man filled with the pure and perfect Godhead, and God received into man. For it was most suitable that the oldest of the Aeons and the first of the Archangels, when about to hold communion with men, should dwell in the oldest and the first of men, even Adam.”¹⁰³

This was no mere Middle Platonic aberration. Hurtado notes that, while there was a definite Creator/creature distinction between God and all others in the Judaism of the period, the difference between God and other heavenly beings was thought to be in degree. “This commitment to the one God of Israel accommodated a large retinue of heavenly beings distinguished from God more in degree than kind as to their attributes, some of these beings portrayed as in fact sharing quite directly in God’s powers and even his name.”¹⁰⁴

This leads into questions about the difference between Jesus’ ontology and that of human beings. After all, Jesus is supposed to be “true man” as well as “true God.” Creedal Christians since Origen have usually explained that Jesus possessed a human body and spirit in addition to “the Word” (meaning his divine nature).¹⁰⁵ However, Kelly writes that the original type of Christology seems to have been a “Spirit Christology,” where the Logos, a divine spirit, took on a body of flesh.¹⁰⁶ In short, “the Word was made flesh” (John 1:14), or as Hippolytus puts

101. Grant, *The Early Christian Doctrine of God*, 81.

102. *Threefold Fruit of the Christian Life* 216–19, quoted in Barker, *The Great Angel*, 203.

103. Methodius, *The Banquet of the Ten Virgins* 3.4 (ANF 6:318).

104. Hurtado, “First-Century Jewish Monotheism,” 367.

105. Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.9 (ANF 4:434). Though perhaps Tertullian preceded him; cf. Tertullian, *On the Flesh of Christ* 11 (ANF 3:532). On the other hand, other passages make Tertullian’s position somewhat ambiguous. See Tertullian, *Against Praxeas* 27 (ANF 3:624).

106. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 142–45.

it, the “Logos we know to have received a body from a virgin.”¹⁰⁷ The *Epistle of Barnabas* states, “He also Himself was to offer in sacrifice for our sins the vessel of the Spirit.”¹⁰⁸ Ignatius of Antioch (ca. A.D. 110) wrote: “God the Word did dwell in a human body, being within it as the Word, even as the soul also is in the body.”¹⁰⁹ Given that the Word dwelt in a human body in place of a normal human spirit, how could Jesus be truly human if his divine nature is separated from humanity by some unbridgeable ontological gap? Thus, the sort of Christology taught in the earliest Christian circles is fundamentally incompatible with the modern creedal concept of God but is quite consistent with the Latter-day Saint concept of God.

The idea that men are essentially the same kind of being as God is found in another Jewish Christian document, the (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Homilies*. “Learn this also: The bodies of men have immortal souls, which have been clothed with the breath of God; and having come forth from God, they are of the same substance, but they are not gods.”¹¹⁰ It should be noted that before the fourth century, phrases such as “of one substance” or “of the same substance” implied a generic unity of species, meaning something like “made of the same kind of stuff.”¹¹¹

God’s Name, God’s Throne

The shrinking ontological gap between God and man discussed above leads into the question of human deification. The Jewish literature from around the time of the earliest Christians has a number of references to deified patriarchs. They were often represented as having received the name of God (Yahweh) and sometimes were able to sit on

107. Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies* 10.29 (ANF 5:152); cf. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies* 3.9.3 (ANF 1:423).

108. *Epistle of Barnabas* 7 (ANF 1:141).

109. Ignatius, *Philadelphians* 6 (ANF 1:83).

110. Peter, in (*Pseudo*)*Clementine Homilies* 16 (ANF 8:316).

111. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines*, 234–35; Stead, *Divine Substance*, 158–59; Stead, *Philosophy in Christian Antiquity*, 160–72.

God's throne or another throne nearby. For example, Gieschen cites the example of Moses sitting on God's throne in the writings of Ezekiel the Tragedian.¹¹² The ancient writing known as *3 Enoch* contains an account of the exaltation of Enoch into Metatron, who is called "The Lesser YHWH," for, "as it is written, 'My name is in him.'"¹¹³

Owen criticizes Hayman's use of the *3 Enoch* text to show that God was not considered to be metaphysically unique.

I would have to agree that Enoch's transformation in this document is unusual (3 En. 4:1–5; cf. 2 En. 22), and possibly *borders* on a break with monotheism. Deification is probably not too strong a term for describing the transformation of a man into "the Lesser YHWH" (3 En. 12:5) and "Prince of the Divine Presence" (12:1). . . .

However, even within the document itself, there are attempts to qualify Metatron's divine status in such a way as to protect the unique identity of the One God: (1) Enoch is seated, not on God's own throne, but on "a throne *like* the throne of glory" (10:1). (2) Enoch is said to be appointed, "as a prince and a ruler over all the denizens of the heights, *apart from the eight great, honored, and terrible princes* who are called YHWH by the name of their King" (10:3). This suggests that Enoch is *not* in fact exalted to the highest possible heavenly status, for there are eight other angelic "princes" above him. God himself is exalted even above these heavenly princes; hence the eight angels create a buffer between Enoch and the One God. (3) In *3 Enoch* 16, Anapiel YHWH (presumably one of the eight heavenly princes) gives Metatron a lashing when Aher sees Metatron "seated upon a throne like a king" (16:2) and declares: "There are indeed two powers in heaven!" (16:3). Metatron is forced to stand up and vacate his

112. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 163–65.

113. *3 Enoch* 12:1–5, cited in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 146–48.

throne when it is sensed that God's unique status has been threatened (16:5). (pp. 297–98, Owen's emphasis)

I admit that this Jewish account of human deification contrasts sharply with Jesus' depiction in the New Testament. For instance, in Revelation 7:15–17, Jesus is depicted as sitting on God's own throne. Owen describes another such instance:

Another place where the title Son of Man is linked with unique divine status is in Mark 14:62, where Jesus replies to the High Priest's question whether he is the messianic Son of God: "I am," said Jesus, "And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." The Jewish response to this statement is predictable—blasphemy! In Jesus' reply to the High Priest, Daniel 7:13 is conflated with Psalm 110:1 (cf. Mk. 12:35–37), which means that the Son of Man will, in fact, be seated on God's own *heavenly* throne (cf. 1 Chr 29:23). (p. 289)

These images really are striking and do indeed suggest a belief that Jesus was truly divine. However, compare the above to Jesus' promise to the faithful in Revelation 3:21: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." If *3 Enoch* shows that the Jews hedged on their deification doctrine, Revelation shows that John certainly did not! Consider also that Owen claims that the fact that "God made the name of Jesus equivalent to the divine name YHWH" (p. 287) means that Jesus was included in God's "unique identity" (p. 286). Compare again Jesus' promise to the faithful in Revelation 3:12: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, . . . and I will write upon him my new name." Through Jesus, the faithful will receive the divine name and become "partakers of the divine nature" (2 Peter 1:4). If the bestowal of the divine name to Jesus means that he is included in God's unique identity, can identical language not mean the same for deified Christians?

I fear that Owen will answer that the two cannot mean the same. For instance, consider Jesus' Intercessory Prayer, in which he asks that his disciples "all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us. . . . And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one" (John 17:21–22). Latter-day Saints have often pointed to this as evidence that (1) the *kind* of unity available to separate human beings is the same sort of thing that binds the Father and the Son in one, although to a degree beyond human experience, and that (2) humans can become one in God just as the Father and Son are one. These seem to be rather explicitly stated points in the text. Although Owen does not address this common Latter-day Saint argument in his essay, Mosser and Owen have previously commented on these verses.¹¹⁴ Noting Stephen Robinson's argument that John 10:30 ("I and my Father are one") should be interpreted in light of John 17:21–22, they respond that John 10:30 and other passages emphasizing the unity of the Father and Son and the divinity of Jesus (John 10:24–25, 28–33, 38; 14:9–11, 16–21) appear prior to this, so we should interpret John 17:21–22 in light of them. This is poor logic. The verses Mosser and Owen cite merely state that the Father and Son are one and that the Father is "in" the Son, but nowhere do they say exactly *how* they are one. I am unaware of any other biblical statements that directly address this issue. The fact is that Jesus asked that the disciples become one "even as we are one" and that they be one "in" the Father and Son. Both instances of "oneness" are specifically equated here, yet Mosser and Owen do not allow that these verses present a very good case for a sort of divine unity that is not a "oneness of being."

With this in mind, let us return to the ancient texts to find out what it would have meant to bestow the divine name on exalted human beings. Psalm 124:8 says, "Our help is in the name of the Lord,

114. Mosser and Owen, review of *How Wide the Divide?* 52–55. I find disturbing the fact that Owen neglects a discussion of this passage when addressing a primarily evangelical audience but discusses it in detail when addressing a primarily Latter-day Saint audience.

who made heaven and earth.” *Hekaloth Rabbati* says, “Great is the Name through which heaven and earth have been created.”¹¹⁵ A Samaritan text asserts that the name of God “is the Name by which all creatures arose.”¹¹⁶ Clement of Rome spoke of God’s “Name, which is the primal source of all creation.”¹¹⁷ Gieschen summarizes, “The cosmogenic significance of the Name probably resulted from its association with the creative command, . . . (‘let there be’), spoken in the act of creation.”¹¹⁸ What is the significance of all this for deified humans who are given the name? Rabbi Akiba (d. A.D. 135) is credited with the following statement:

The Holy One, blessed be He, will in the future call all of the pious by their names, and give them a cup of elixir of life in their hands so that they should live and endure forever. . . . And the Holy One, blessed be He, will in the future reveal to all the pious in the World to Come the Ineffable Name with which new heavens and a new earth can be created, so that all of them should be able to create new worlds. . . . The Holy One, blessed be He, will give every pious three hundred and forty worlds in inheritance in the World to Come.¹¹⁹

Conclusions

While the issues that Owen mainly oversimplifies are the same ones that Latter-day Saints themselves often treat with similar shallowness, I was hoping for much more from him. Certainly, he knows that Latter-day Saints are not troubled by scriptural passages that say there is “one God,” yet he chooses to argue against our position as if it

115. *Hekaloth Rabbati* 9, in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 74.

116. *Memar Marqa* 4.2, in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 74.

117. *1 Clement* 59:3, in Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 74.

118. Gieschen, *Angelomorphic Christology*, 74.

119. Midrash Alpha Beta diR. Akiba, BhM 3:32, quoted in Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979), 251. I gratefully acknowledge John Tvedtnes for providing me with this reference.

were simple polytheism. This is just as unacceptable as it would be for Latter-day Saints to argue against creedal Trinitarianism as if it were modalism (as they sometimes do). If the intent of *The New Mormon Challenge* is to raise the level of dialogue between Latter-day Saints and evangelicals (see, for example, pp. 25–26), why not take the opportunity to rise above the simplistic level and focus strictly on real issues that divide us, rather than wasting space on nonissues? I submit that the dialogue regarding the divine unity ought to focus on *how*, rather than *whether*, God is one. We should discuss *how*, rather than *whether*, God is unique.

I have not addressed every point Owen makes against Barker and Hayman on the subjects of the plurality of gods, the ontological gap between God and man, and man's potential for deification, but I believe I have shown that he does not treat the scholars fairly. He has certainly not made a case that Latter-day Saint apologists should stop citing them. The really odd thing about Owen's essay is that he takes only six pages (pp. 309–14) out of forty-four to address specifically the arguments of Daniel Peterson, whose essay on these issues is perhaps the most comprehensive scholarly treatment so far from a Latter-day Saint point of view.¹²⁰ Although Owen admits that Peterson's work "poses a more serious challenge to orthodox Christian theology" than does the work of Hayman and Barker; he takes only a few minor swipes at it before confessing that "I do not have space here to offer a point-by-point response to Peterson's arguments" (p. 309). Perhaps not, but he could have made a larger dent if he had forgone his discussions of whether the earliest Christians and the Jews of the Second Temple period were "monotheists" in some sense and whether the first Christians thought of Jesus as being "included within God's unique identity." So regardless of his intent, Owen has only succeeded in addressing an oversimplified caricature of Latter-day Saint belief rather than our best arguments.

120. Daniel C. Peterson, "Ye Are Gods: Psalm 82 and John 10 as Witnesses to the Divine Nature of Humankind," in *The Disciple as Scholar: Essays on Scripture and the Ancient World in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 471–594.

A DANCER/JOURNALIST'S ANTI-MORMON DIATRIBE

Rockwell D. Porter¹

Anti-Mormon literature, some of which is focused on the Mormon past, continues to pour from the presses.² Some of it comes highly recommended. Can it be trusted?

The Mormon Past through the Lens of a Few Anti-Mormon Sources

Richard Abanes came to the task of revealing “the true and complete history of Mormonism,” which he sets forth in *One Nation under Gods*, with truly remarkable credentials. These need to be known. In the 1980s he was involved with a controversial religious movement started in Ohio by Victor Paul Wierville called the Way International. Much like other joiners or cult-shifters, he was soon dissatisfied with his first “cult” experience and became a countercultist. He was

1. Rockwell D. Porter is a composite effort of several scholars from different academic disciplines who collaborated in writing this review.

2. Some of these publishers (that is, printers) have rather strange-sounding names, even when they are not exactly in faraway places. Four Walls Eight Windows is not exactly a household name. This is not, however, to say that a book by Richard Abanes will not be aggressively marketed by the sectarian countercult movement.

Review of Richard Abanes. *One Nation under Gods: A History of the Mormon Church*. New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 2002. xxv + 651 pp., with bibliography and index. \$32.00.

employed by the Christian Research Institute (CRI), a wealthy countercult started by the late Walter Martin, which later came under the control of Hank Hanegraaff. Along with Bill McKeever, Kurt Van Gorden, and others, in 1997 Abanes was heavily involved in the production of the revised, updated, and expanded edition of Martin's notorious countercult classic entitled *The Kingdom of the Cults*.³

Subsequently, an ugly, acrimonious falling-out took place between Hanegraaff and Martin's former disciples (and also Martin's family) over, among other things, the control and direction of CRI. Hanegraaff terminated Abanes and his wife, Evangeline (aka Bri), along with over a hundred other employees. Tempers flared, angry letters were written, and lawsuits followed. The feud between these competing countercult factions has not gone away. Hence, one of the unexplained anomalies of this episode of internecine fighting in the fundamentalist/evangelical countercult movement is the glowing endorsement given to *One Nation under Gods* by Hanegraaff (dust cover). Abanes and Hanegraaff now seem to be on good terms.

But who is Richard Abanes? He is a confident, handsome fellow in his early forties. In addition to having started out as a "cultist" and then a countercultist when he was somehow liberated from his initial cultic bondage, he is a former Broadway singer/dancer, having performed in "Dreamgirls" and "A Chorus Line," as well as appearing in TV commercials and movies. He also advertises himself as an investigative reporter who is, of course, a recognized authority on cults and new religious movements. He has published books warning against cults and new religions.⁴ And he currently operates both his own countercult called Religious Information Center (RIC) and some-

3. See Walter R. Martin, *The Kingdom of the Cults*, ed. Hank Hanegraaff (Minneapolis, Minn.: Bethany House, 1997).

4. See, for example, Richard Abanes, *Defending the Faith: A Beginner's Guide to Cults and New Religions* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1997); *End-Time Visions: The Doomsday Obsession*, 2nd ed. (Nashville, Tenn.: Broadman & Holman, 1998); and *Fantasy and Your Family: A Closer Look at the Lord of the Rings, Harry Potter, and Modern Magick* (Camp Hill, Pa.: Horizon Books, 2002). His sensationalistic harangue against the Harry Potter books has made him very controversial and an object of much ridicule.

thing called Eternity Music, which markets religious music that he claims is sensitive, comforting, and worshipful.

One Nation under Gods falls squarely into the category of agenda-driven exposé. For Abanes the history of Mormonism is “rife with nefarious deeds, corruption, vice, and intolerance” (p. 436). Sandra Tanner, in her foreword to *One Nation under Gods* (pp. xiii–xiv), tells a version of how she was raised in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and of her apostasy. When questions occurred to her that presumably were not answered to her satisfaction, she doubted the truth of her childhood faith; she concluded that Brigham Young, who was one of her distant ancestors, was “not the holy prophet of God I thought he was” (p. xiii). Sandra, in league with her somewhat eremitic husband, sought and of course soon found “a dark side” (p. xiii) to the Church of Jesus Christ, which they have been working to expose and publicize ever since. “Career apostates,” as Lawrence Foster calls them,⁵ the Tanners have provided grist for the anti-Mormon mill for several decades.⁶ In endorsing *One Nation under Gods*, Sandra Tanner also conveniently summarizes it. It details, she says, “the LDS church’s quest for religious supremacy” and its “desire for economic and political dominance in order to pave the way for the Kingdom of God on Earth” (p. xiv). She continues, “Joseph Smith’s occult practices, the creation of the *Book of Mormon*, the mysterious Danite assassins, Joseph Smith’s murder, the Mormon move to Utah, blood atonement killings, polygamy, Mormon cover-ups and conspiracies—all are discussed in this volume” (p. xiv). It turns out that *One Nation under Gods* is essentially a rehash of

5. Lawrence Foster, “Career Apostates: Reflections on the Works of Jerald and Sandra Tanner,” *Dialogue* 17/2 (1984): 35–60; reprinted in a modified version under the title “Apostate Believers: Jerald and Sandra Tanner’s Encounter with Mormon History,” in *Differing Visions: Dissenters in Mormon History*, ed. Roger D. Launius and Linda Thatcher (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1994), 343–65.

6. In a revealing tale of the source and emotional power behind the lifelong hostility of the Tanners to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Sandra Tanner presented a talk, “Reflections on 42 Years of Apostasy,” to the Eighth Annual Ex-Mormon Conference, 5 October 2002, in Salt Lake City.

previous indictments and assessments assembled by the Tanners and spread by them through their so-called “ministry.” Abanes does, of course, supplement what the Tanners have assembled, unfortunately often with “research” gathered from anti-Mormon Web sites, some of which are simply despicable.⁷

To round out the catalog of horrors that make up *One Nation under Gods*, one might add the following: polygamy as an oppressive marriage system, the deceptive plural marriages that occurred after the Manifesto, the refusal of church leaders to allow examination of the source materials that would supposedly prove the corruption and evil of Mormonism, the racism of the church, and the failure of the 1978 revelation granting the priesthood to blacks to measure up to the high moral demands of critics of the church like Sandra Tanner. We even get the so-called Olympic scandal (the charges against Utahns on the local committee for using bribery to influence the decision of the International Olympic Committee to hold the winter games of 2002 in Salt Lake City). You get the idea. Launching sweeping condemnations of the work of Latter-day Saint historians, Abanes helpfully tells us how he will provide “a more objective sketch” by using as his source materials “non-LDS witnesses, secular media articles, and private journals” (p. xvi). His starting point, in other words, is an assertion that the existing histories are cover-ups or otherwise flawed because they do not give the negative information (or spin) that, if available, would pull the Church of Jesus Christ from its foundations and expose the damning dark side of Latter-day Saint beliefs

7. The endnotes for *One Nation under Gods* (pp. 475–618) are revealing. Abanes often sends his readers to Web sites for information. He cannot provide page numbers or guarantee that the item cited will even be available to the reader. He also frequently indicates that he is quoting from a secondhand source, indicating that he has not read the original and hence is not aware of the context. And one wonders if he has read or understood the literature he cites. A fine example is provided by a note in “About Mormon History” (pp. xvi, 477 n. 6); he cites a dozen essays without an indication of what issues are being discussed in the literature he cites. Those unfamiliar with historical scholarship may assume that a mass of citations ensures sound scholarship. This is not true. Instead, bloated endnotes often demonstrate, when the citations are checked or when one knows the literature being cited, the fragility of a literature.

and practices. His effort resembles an attempt to write the history of Judaism from anti-Semitic sources.

But how accurate is his bald, sweeping dismissal of all previous published histories? Do any of the traditional histories admit that the Saints were sometimes abrasive and made themselves nuisances in Missouri? Try B. H. Roberts. Try Joseph Fielding Smith or any general history. Do these histories tell about and condemn the Mountain Meadows Massacre? As for the murders in frontier Utah in the 1850s, Roberts reviews those that were of high profile and were charged to the Saints, though he does not simply accept the unproven allegations of Mormon-haters. And what of the impressive accumulation of scholarship over the past three decades, not to mention significant earlier works?⁸ Is any of this to be trusted? Has Abanes allowed his readers even to know of its existence? Is he, one wonders, aware of this literature? The fact is that, in all periods and different areas of church history, valuable works exist—theses, dissertations, articles, books. But with his key in hand, Abanes picks what he wishes—whatever will serve his partisan purposes—and then cavalierly suppresses or sweeps all the rest into the dustbin.

For instance, in discussing the so-called wealth of the church, an evenhanded, dispassionate analysis would give the figures, where they are available and reliable, and explain where these resources come from and what they are used for. What we get here instead is the *National Enquirer* approach: screaming headlines and charges—implied if not stated—of a nefarious conspiracy.

One effect of the rapid-fire, accusatory form of this book is that anyone who wishes to respond fully in a review of it is faced with an

8. How well Abanes has mastered the relevant literature on the historical topics he addresses can be determined by glancing at his endnotes (pp. 475–618) and by noting what is not included in his “Select[ed] Bibliography” (pp. 619–27). To see what Abanes has in mind by “select,” one might compare his list of sources with what can be found in *Studies in Mormon History, 1830–1997: An Indexed Bibliography*, ed. James B. Allen, Ronald W. Walker, and David J. Whittaker (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000). Even a beginning student of the Mormon past, such as Abanes, should begin by consulting the relevant literature.

essentially impossible task. A topic-by-topic discussion, looking at the evidence and evaluating it, would require a book as long as the book being reviewed; in fact, it would require more space, because weighing evidence, considering pros and cons, simply cannot be accomplished without a more ample treatment of each issue.

For a sample of the Abanes method, consider his description of Brigham Young, his arch demon (pp. 220–21). Both Young himself and Heber C. Kimball spoke of his being a “dictator” on a couple of occasions, meaning that he had dictated to the people what they should do. Voilà. For Abanes, Brigham was in fact a ruthless dictator in the twentieth-century sense of that word. Think Hitler. Think Stalin. Is there reason to doubt that this is the intended impression? Then take this evidence: Brigham Young once said that “the man whom God calls to dictate affairs in the building up of his Zion has the right to dictate about everything connected with the building up of Zion, yes even to the ribbons the women wear; and any person who denies it is ignorant.”⁹ Overstated just a bit? Probably. But the key point, of course, is whether that “right” was translated into action.

Doubtless Abanes would not like to hear anyone else invite or tell *him* what to do. It is hard to imagine his accepting a mission call or a call to settle. But did Brigham Young really presume to tell all the people all the time everything that they should do? Did the Saints have to get his permission before going to the bathroom? Did he tell each Saint what crops he should plant? If someone made some choices on his own, was that Saint sent to hell across lots? That is the impression given by Abanes. “Those who dared object to these stringent directives were immediately disciplined” (p. 221). They could not even own personal property, says Abanes, showing scant awareness of the nature or chronology of the law of consecration, its limited application, or its abandonment.

This scenario raises a slight problem: If the Saints were quaking in their boots, afraid to do or say anything unless it was approved,

9. *Journal of Discourses*, 11:298.

what was the source of the “murmuring” that makes up much of Latter-day Saint history? If the Saints were so locked into a totalitarian system that they were forced to obey every whim of their evil leaders, why is it that the sermons are filled with calls for the Saints to be more obedient, to observe the Sabbath day, to stop backbiting, to be true to their covenants? Apparently, some of them did pretty much what they wanted to.

“Controversial”—what does this word mean? Does it not mean something like “debatable”—that the evidence is not clear-cut or that opinions differ, that something can be said on both sides? In this sense, presumably, the Church of Jesus Christ is and always has been controversial. So has Joseph Smith, who heard from Moroni that his name “should be had for good and evil” (Joseph Smith—History 1:33). As one reads through this book, chapter after chapter, topic after topic, is labeled controversial. But do not count on Abanes to let you know what, if anything, can be said in defense of the church. Do not count on him to show any reservations about accepting wholesale the testimony of hostile witnesses. This is a book for those who want to go over everything negative that has ever been said about the church, its leaders, and its members. Would it be possible for a fundamentalist preacher to do a similar job on Jews or Roman Catholics or other groups? And how adequate or fair would we consider such an approach? Would a “Select Bibliography” and bloated endnotes somehow turn such an adventure into genuine history?

A key to the mind-set of Abanes is his list of “Recommended Resources”—which turn out to be Web sites since he seems to assume that this is where one should look for sound information. One after another, the anti-Mormon references are listed and described as “valuable,” “important,” or “excellent,” while “websites by devout Mormons tend to be overtly biased and permeated with LDS propaganda” (p. 469). Apparently in an effort to appear fair, he lists eight references to “Mormons/Fundamentalists/RLDS” and gives each a brief evaluation. The *Deseret News*, he says, is “biased, and unabashedly pro-LDS” (p. 472). The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) is dismissed as “highly biased, very unreliable,” and, get this,

“often misleading due to its use of historical, archeological, and linguistic arguments unverifiable by persons not possessing higher education” (p. 473). Abanes says nothing about *BYU Studies*, the *Journal of Mormon History*, or *Utah Historical Quarterly*. He shows no disposition to summarize or even acknowledge scholarly work that fails to show the Saints as evil, corrupt, and the like. There is no engagement here, no conversation, no honest debate, no careful assessment, no “controversy.” But, of course, UMI Ministries (what Abanes calls Utah Missions, Inc., using a name popular before a hostile takeover orchestrated by the Reverend Dennis Wright removed the Reverend John L. Smith from control of his “Ministry”) is described as “a solidly evangelical Christian organization” (p. 472), with no mention that the literature it has distributed over the years has tended to be sensationalistic and inaccurate.

Like others who have provided introductory books on Mormonism, Abanes sees the need for a “Glossary of Mormon Terms” (pp. 437–44). Most of the definitions, though short and inevitably inadequate, carry no barb. But the “great and abominable church” is defined as “all religious assemblies, congregations, churches, or associations of people that are not Mormon” (p. 440). Give us a break. The Gideon Bible Society or Mother Teresa’s service missions have not been described by this term and are, along with countless other such organizations, not so considered among Latter-day Saints. Abanes is not subtle or reflective.

Perhaps realizing that his readers will be overwhelmed by unfamiliar names, Abanes also includes a biographical listing of “Notable Mormons” (pp. 445–49). These are usually one-sentence entries with no effort to list, even in summary form, the main features of the person’s life. Whenever applicable, he concludes the entry with capitalized “APOSTATIZED” or “EXCOMMUNICATED.” It is interesting to discover what Abanes considers the main defining feature of each person’s connection with the church. George Q. Cannon is “First Counselor in the First Presidency, went to prison for polygamy” (p. 445). Martin Harris is identified as one of the Three Witnesses who “APOSTATIZED” (p. 446), with no acknowledgment of his re-

turn to membership in the church. Boyd K. Packer is a “powerful LDS apostle, acting president of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles, nicknamed ‘Darth Packer’ for his authoritarian ways and strict adherence to LDS beliefs, thought to be behind the string of excommunications of intellectuals in the early 1990s” (p. 447). B. H. Roberts, according to this quick summary, “eventually lost his faith in the *Book of Mormon* by investigating its historicity” (p. 448). No contrary evidence is allowed.¹⁰ Brigham Young, whose tempest-filled, challenging life stretched over seventy-six years and who, by any rational reckoning, has major achievements to his credit, is summed up as follows: “second Mormon president, ruthless and calculating, governed Utah and the LDS church for thirty years, a period during which the horrific doctrine of blood atonement was practiced” (p. 449). And so it goes.

In the universe of those who think like Abanes are two large classes of people who write about Mormonism: (1) the benighted and deceived or, worse, the deliberately dishonest who hide the truth and explain away events and statements that fail to project a Pollyanna, hearts-and-flowers version of the past; and (2) the intelligent, honest, “objective” persons, like himself, who lay it all out. The trouble, unfortunately, is that he does not lay it all out. His effort ends up telling us more about the countercult mind-set than about the Latter-day Saints and their faith.

One Nation under Gods presents itself as “A History of the Mormon Church.” That is false advertising. Instead, it is a “History of the Dark Side of the ‘Mormon Church,’” or, to be more conversational, a consecutive lineup of everything damning that anyone has ever said about the Church of Jesus Christ or its members. This the author admits. And if Abanes was really writing an “objective,” “unbiased” history of the Church of Jesus Christ, why does he include a tendentious chapter entitled “Is Mormonism Christian?” (pp. 375–400)?¹¹

10. See Daniel C. Peterson, review of “The Disappointment of B. H. Roberts: Five Questions That Forced a Mormon General Authority to Abandon the Book of Mormon,” by James R. Spencer, *FARMS Review of Books* 9/1 (1997): 69–86.

11. Abanes treats his readers to two of those self-serving, question-begging charts in which “Mormon Beliefs . . .” are listed—often inaccurately—on the left side of a page and

Did the leadership of the church ever do anything good? One must turn to others to find out about relief programs and aid to Native Americans. Certainly, there is nothing here about the generous humanitarian aid sent to disaster areas in all parts of the world. There is no mention of cooperation between Latter-day Saints and Roman Catholics in efforts to reduce human suffering. That would not confirm the horrifying stereotype Abanes wishes to project. At the very least, one supposes, the Saints should be allowed to speak for themselves. One does not have to go far to find people who see the Church of Jesus Christ as a great blessing in their lives, but they do not appear in this book.

This is a book to be used with great caution. On each of the specific incidents or charges, moving through the book chapter by chapter, the reader should say something like this: “Well, that is what the *enemies* said. How well does it hold up? Even if true in some sense, how *representative* is it?” One must not, in other words, accept the Abanes version as the whole, unvarnished, and unbiased truth. This book will not help readers to better understand their Latter-day Saint neighbors. It does run the risk of promoting the kind of aversion and rejection that led in earlier times to pogroms against Jews, lynchings of blacks by the Ku Klux Klan, and, come to think of it, the massacre of the Saints at Haun’s Mill. This is what comes from a one-sided presentation, focusing on the “dark side,” seeing no qualifications, never allowing a group to speak for itself, never trying to listen and learn from the other one.

The author leaves out nothing that he thinks might put his subject in a bad light. And in each instance, he puts the worst possible interpretation on the incident or event. If there is anything to be

“Christian Beliefs . . .” are presented on the right side (pp. 378, 382). The supposed purpose of these charts is to help the reader decide if those “Mormons” are Christians. What we miss is a neon light flashing the word “No!” But the punch line of the chapter, following in the footsteps of Walter Martin, is that the Church of Jesus Christ is a cult. Even some of the more bellicose sectarian anti-Mormons have begun to abandon that charge, but not Abanes.

said on the positive side, he ignores it or mentions it only to sweep it aside. If the Mormon-haters of the past made allegations, that is good enough for Abanes.

Abanes does not pretend to be a historian; he boasts rather of being an “investigative reporter”—that is, a journalist, and his work is merely a “popular” account and not scholarship. What he does is to take advantage of the work of others. But, as suggested earlier, it is a select group he lines up in his support: These include career apostates, excommunicants (often for moral failings), homosexuals, self-proclaimed experts, dissidents, and those who wish to warn the world against the sinister, secret, malignant “cult” they consider Mormonism to be. It is instructive to see how a dozen or so negative writers—when we boil it down, that is what it comes to—can be used to such effect when their views are brought together in a relentless onslaught on the Saints. In their mind, and apparently in the mind of Abanes, they are pure-minded, objective, unbiased, honest truth seekers with nothing more in mind than the good of humanity. If you are just a little suspicious of such pretense, you should be.

Journalists like snappy headlines and attention-grabbing declarations. Not reluctant to offer a conclusion at the end of his book, Abanes writes: “The history of Mormonism is rife with nefarious deeds, corruption, vice, and intolerance. So far the fruits of Mormonism have included lust, greed, theft, fraud, violence, murder, religious fanaticism, bribery, and racism” (p. 436). Apparently, the author does not like the Church of Jesus Christ. As he sees it, Latter-day Saints are bad—really bad. (We notice, though, that he forgot to mention one of the seven deadly sins—gluttony.) If any ordinary member of the church raises her hand and wants to say that, for her, the “fruits” are quite different and far more positive, she will be ruled out of order.

Sandra Tanner endorses this vituperative attack by Abanes as “ideal for anyone wanting a concise, accurate, and easy-to-understand history of Mormonism from its inception to the present” (dust cover). Not convinced? Then listen to Hank Hanegraaff: The book “reveals . . . the true and complete history of Mormonism from its nineteenth

century origins to the 2002 Olympics” (dust cover). Hanegraaff is president of the Christian Research Institute. For Michael Shermer, publisher of *Skeptic* magazine, Abanes has produced “a triumph of research and wisdom” (dust cover). Wisdom, no less. If you wonder whether any of these endorsers have axes to grind, do not dare to ask—and they will not tell.

An “Educator’s” View of the Church of Jesus Christ

There is a curious link between Richard Abanes’s book and one written by Charles L. Wood LLC.¹² It turns out to be none other than Sandra Tanner, who does public relations for the Mom and Pop anti-Mormon “ministry” that she and her husband, Jerald, have operated for years in Salt Lake City. She highly recommends both *One Nation under Gods* and *The Mormon Conspiracy*.¹³ One might fault her for doing this, but that would be unfair, for she does not seem properly equipped to provide an informed judgment—she seems, instead, to have never matured past her initial hostility for the Latter-day Saints, and, in addition, she is quite unfamiliar with the scholarly literature on the Church of Jesus Christ. If a book is anti-Mormon or can be used as a weapon against the Saints, she and her husband appear ready to market it.

In *The Mormon Conspiracy*, Wood indicates that he “first became interested in researching the Mormon Church when he was given

12. Charles L. Wood LLC, *The Mormon Conspiracy* (San Diego: Black Forest, 2001). The LLC that is included as part of Wood’s name would seem to identify him as a Limited Liability Corporation. The following appears on the reverse side of the title page of his book: “Black Forest Press disclaims any association with or responsibility for the ideas, opinions or facts expressed by the author of his book. No dialogue is totally accurate or precise.” It seems that both Wood and those who printed his book are anxious about reactions to the content of *The Mormon Conspiracy*. It is, however, sectarian anti-Mormon preachers who tend to want to settle religious questions, to intimidate others, or to enrich themselves by turning to the courts.

13. Sandra Tanner’s summary of *One Nation under Gods* also describes the contents of *The Mormon Conspiracy*. This should not be surprising, since sectarian anti-Mormon books are often hackneyed paint-by-the-numbers affairs and are usually heavily larded with recycled materials.

a copy of the *Book of Mormon*.”¹⁴ Then he is proud to claim that “several books have been researched, and quotes from them have been used to reinforce and document the conclusions reached in this book.”¹⁵ Wood consulted only literature in one way or another hostile to the Church of Jesus Christ, including, he boasts, “Janice Hutchinson’s *The Mormon Missionaries*, Fawn Brodie’s *No Man Knows My History*, Sonia Johnson’s *From Housewife to Heretic*, Deborah Laake’s *Secret Ceremonies*, Latayne Colvett Scott’s *The Mormon Mirage* and D. Michael Quinn’s *The Mormon Hierarchy, Extensions of Power*.”¹⁶ One assumes he considers these works to be disinterested, scholarly treatises.

And what did Wood, who has “held positions as teacher and administrator in elementary, secondary and higher education” and who once was the “editor of the national journal, *American Secondary Education*,”¹⁷ learn from this “research” in such secondary literature? He reports that he was

dismayed at what he was learning about the church and felt an obligation to put down in writing these concerns, especially since they contrasted sharply with his understanding of freedom of thought, individualism, democracy and independence. Intensive reading and research brought about the discovery by the author that the history of the church was fraught with deception, authoritarian rule and leadership and was conspiratorial in its development.¹⁸

He thus “feels obligated to present the documentation that he feels reveals the fraud and dishonesty that the church’s vast propaganda

14. Wood, *The Mormon Conspiracy*, i.

15. *Ibid.*, iii.

16. *Ibid.* Hence sixty-three of his endnotes cite Quinn, thirty-three cite Brodie, thirty-five cite Scott, twenty-two cite Laake, eighteen cite Hutchinson, and so forth. Fourteen anti-Mormon writers provide nearly three hundred of his 373 endnotes. He seems rather innocently unaware of Latter-day Saint sources or scholarship.

17. According to the back cover of *The Mormon Conspiracy*, Wood has a Ph.D. from the University of Iowa and “was a professor at the University of Akron.”

18. Wood, *The Mormon Conspiracy*, iv.

machine dispenses, as well as its real threat to democracy and freedom in America and throughout the world.”¹⁹

As it turns out, Wood is also not fond of America’s guarantees of religious freedom, the protection accorded American citizens abroad, or tax exemptions for religions. He insists, for example, that the State Department of the United States is helping Latter-day Saint missionaries to subvert the freedoms found abroad by helping to bring to power what he describes as a “monarchial style of administration” in which “the ‘President’ of the church is not elected by church members, but assumes power strictly by seniority.”²⁰ Apparently, young missionaries, who carefully avoid any political activity, seek to transform the systems of government of countries throughout the world. Yet, if it is the governance of the church itself he is describing, the pope, who is not popularly elected by Catholics worldwide, is presumably equally dangerous. Moreover, in his view, “the liberal taxing policies of the United States provide the church with excessive tax exemptions which is [*sic*] being used by the church to attain its goal of Mormonizing America and the world.”²¹ These two complaints are not merely stray, unsupported opinions—they are the conclusions to his book and appear to be his original contributions to anti-Mormonism.

What Abanes and Wood have produced is neither serious historiography nor sober commentary. Quite the contrary. Each is a shameful work of sensationalistic, inflammatory propaganda. Both books reflect discredit upon their authors, their publishers, and those who promote them.

19. *Ibid.*, v.

20. *Ibid.*

21. *Ibid.*, 253.

HOW POLEMICISM CORRUPTED LATTER-DAY SAINT APOLOGETICS

Benjamin I. Huff

Hopkins's subject, as expressed in the title of his book, is an important one that deserves more attention among Latter-day Saint thinkers. First, he presents a “big-picture” view of what Latter-day Saints regard as an apostasy among the early Christians. He explains its origins and mechanisms and the resulting classical theist view of God. Then he proceeds to argue for the Latter-day Saint view of God—as opposed to the traditional Christian¹ view—on historical, scriptural, and philosophical grounds. While few would dispute the idea that Greek and Hellenistic philosophy influenced traditional Christian teaching, Latter-day Saints have a unique perspective on the nature and extent of that influence, particularly on how it may have been destructive.

To address these topics is an ambitious proposition and more than one man could fully accomplish in a lifetime, let alone in one

1. By “traditional Christians,” I mean, broadly, Roman Catholics, Protestants, and Eastern Orthodox. Of course, there are important differences of belief among them, but on many points in this review I will treat them as a group, as all maintaining some variation on classical theism.

Review of Richard R. Hopkins. *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God*. Bountiful, Utah: Horizon, 1998. 464 pp., with scripture and subject indexes. \$24.98.

book. I admire Hopkins's willingness to approach these issues.² However, the simple magnitude of the task does not excuse many of the book's shortcomings. Although the book has some very welcome qualities, it also has the unfortunate drawbacks of being chronically inaccurate, unpersuasive, and unfair. If the intent of his arguments was merely to leave his opponents tongue-tied or frustrated, he might succeed, and such a goal may be well suited to, say, a radio talk show. But it is not appropriate for a book that ought, first and foremost, to inform its reader about an important, controversial topic.

Hopkins aspires to present a comprehensive case for the superiority of the Latter-day Saint view of God over the traditional Christian view, and the form of his presentation fits this aspiration. In substance, however, the book only half escapes being an unsatisfying retort to one minor contemporary polemic. Hopkins's work has succumbed to the typical vices of polemic itself, and thus his reasoning is no more sound on the whole than that in the article to which it primarily responds: Francis Beckwith's "Philosophical Problems with the Mormon Concept of God."³ This review will mainly assess what went wrong in the hope of improving the quality of discussion and understanding between Latter-day Saints and traditional Christians. I will conclude with some remarks on what it would take to treat this

2. Hopkins was educated in engineering and law. Besides working in law, he has appeared on a number of radio shows, including "The Bible Answerman," and has hosted his own weekly show, "Religion Today," broadcast in Utah on the Wasatch Front. At the time of publication of *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God*, Hopkins was manager of sales and marketing for the publisher (dust jacket).

Perhaps his experience in law influences the argumentative style of the book. In a United States courtroom, it is not the job of the prosecuting attorney, for example, to mention evidence that strengthens the case for the defense. A scholar, however, must strive for objectivity, presenting in the most defensible way even views he criticizes.

3. Hopkins indicates that the book began largely as a response to Francis Beckwith's article, which appeared in *Christian Research Journal* 14/4 (1992): 24–29. Strangely, Hopkins cites the article as it appears on the Internet, while neglecting Beckwith's more comprehensive book on the same topic, *The Mormon Concept of God*, coauthored with Stephen Parrish (Lewiston: Mellen, 1991). Beckwith's article describes itself as presenting a mere sample of the more thorough work in this and another book.

subject properly. Making the attempt at all is laudable, but we can and must do better.⁴

Perhaps the most unsettling feature of the book is its oscillation between generosity and antagonism. The title is misleading in one sense: the book generously casts Greek philosophy as an almost innocent bystander in the corruption of the Christian concept of God, attributing the main cause to a lack of proper leadership. Hopkins shows us that Greek philosophy contains valuable truths and that the philosophers' work helped prepare the way for Christ's teachings to be more readily received, especially among the Gentiles. Hopkins is also generous in his account of early Christian figures: they unwittingly ushered in false views of God while striving to uphold their faith under difficult conditions, ironically introducing error through their attempts at apologetics.

Unfortunately, the polemical ring of the title is rather representative of the second half of the book. The tension between these two moods comes through strikingly when Hopkins warns Latter-day Saint readers who converse with traditional Christians about the nature of God: "like the Pharisees of Christ's time, many orthodox Christians feel they are listening to blasphemy when anyone disagrees with their concept of God. That reaction must be treated with kindness and consideration" (p. 29). Hopkins is right that we must be kind and considerate. Yet comparing our traditional Christian contemporaries to the Pharisees, whom they, as well as we, remember as archetypes of hypocrisy, is hardly an example of kindness and consideration. Instead, it insults traditional Christians while encouraging Latter-day Saints to be judgmental and dismissive. This same

4. By *we* I mean the Latter-day Saint community, especially thinkers and writers. I am a committed Latter-day Saint and accept part of the responsibility to do better. In this review I will argue that much of Hopkins's attack on traditional Christian views is unfair. Of course, I agree with Hopkins that the LDS view is more correct, reflecting a greater portion of revealed truth. Still, it is imperative that we be fair and charitable in considering traditional Christian views. We must acknowledge what truth we find there, and we must not represent traditional Christians as unreasonable or insincere where their errors arise primarily from a lack of prophetic leadership.

dismissive mood pervades the second half of the book in reasoning too superficial to be persuasive and in rhetoric more insulting than the example above. Thus while Hopkins's presentation on Greek and early Christian belief may cultivate charity in the Latter-day Saint reader, his treatment of traditional Christian belief as it stands today does not. This does not seem in harmony with the gospel that teaches us to love both neighbor and enemy. Surely we must first love our brothers whom we have seen and then worry about whether we love those who have been dead for centuries.

Overview

The most helpful parts of the book are parts 1 and 2, which trace the historical origins of the false teachings that took hold following the deaths of the original apostles. Part 1 surveys Greek and Hellenistic philosophy, highlighting ideas that later caused trouble for Christianity and sketching the spread of Greek ideas and educational practices. Part 2 identifies major intellectual figures in the early Christian community and traces their responses to pressures on the community. It explores the origin of doctrines Latter-day Saints believe to be mistaken and suggests causes for the adoption of these doctrines. Here Hopkins offers a generally sensible perspective that may be helpful to Latter-day Saint readers who wonder what to make of Greek philosophy and its influence on the early Christians. The kernel of his account of how mistaken ideas took hold is persuasive and illuminating, though, regrettably, he misconstrues some of the key ideas themselves.

Part 3 considers traditional Christian beliefs about God as they stand today such as God's status as creator; his omnipotence, omniscience, omnipresence, and immutability; and the nature of the three persons of the Godhead. Hopkins critiques these beliefs in terms of their historical roots, their foundation in and consistency with scripture, and their philosophical defensibility. In part 4 Hopkins pauses to rebut recent philosophical attacks on the Latter-day Saint doctrine of

God before the final, summary chapter. These latter parts suffer most from the disappointingly cavalier approach Hopkins takes to both his opponents and his reasoning.

Having been trained in philosophy, I will comment briefly on Hopkins's sections on history and theology and will deal at greater length with his reasoning in the philosophical and scriptural defense of the Latter-day Saint doctrine of God. I will also take up several points on which his rhetoric is highly offensive. The book addresses a huge range and number of issues. I will comment on a few of the most important, as well as on others that provide examples of recurring problems with Hopkins's approach. I will close with some reflections on what might be required to effectively carry out the worthy project Hopkins attempts.

Part 1

Hopkins's brief history in part 1 gives the reader a tantalizing glimpse into Greek and Hellenistic philosophy. The main function of this part is to highlight currents of Greek thought that figure prominently in the formation of traditional Christian orthodoxy: Hopkins emphasizes Parmenidean metaphysics; Aristotle's notion of substance, or *ousia*; the notion of a priori knowledge; and the Hellenistic tradition of allegorical interpretation. These currents are important for understanding the historical origins of classical theology. Further, in learning about them, the reader also becomes familiar with concepts necessary for understanding the contemporary theological debate Hopkins pursues in parts 3 and 4. His choice of topics is sensible, but his treatment of each of them has serious problems, as I will demonstrate. There is one conspicuous lapse of coverage, as well: Hopkins does not offer a focused discussion of the disdainful view of matter as corrupt that appears in the writings of Plato and others, although this view certainly contributed to the traditional belief that God is incorporeal.

The most helpful feature of this section is Hopkins's effort to temper the typical Latter-day Saint wariness of philosophy.⁵ His message is welcome because many Latter-day Saints are accustomed to thinking of philosophy as inherently in conflict with faith. True, the philosophies of men have sometimes led people away from revealed truth; yet, Hopkins points out, in its own way Greek philosophy prepared the Gentiles to receive the gospel, much like the law of Moses prepared the Hebrews. Hopkins refers to several philosophical teachings that resemble biblical truths or truths of the restoration. For instance, Aristotle and the Stoics spoke of one God rather than many—one who is perfectly good and just rather than whimsical and selfish, as Zeus and his ilk appear to be in some stories. Plato tells of a time before our births when our souls learned eternal truths firsthand, and he teaches that these truths are the key to happiness, both in this life and afterward. The Stoics taught that all human beings are brothers and sisters.

Though he is right to recognize truths in the classical texts, Hopkins seems a bit too ready to see his own ideas reflected in them. For example, according to Plato's view of our premortal existence, our souls supposedly learned everything there, and our embodied state is something we should be glad to escape; however, according to Latter-day Saint belief, we are blessed with mortality and a body so that we may learn things we could not have learned in the premortal state (see pp. 43–44; cf. Meno 81d; Crito 66b–67b; 2 Nephi 2:22–26; Abraham 3:24–26). Similarly, Hopkins seems simply to read his own LDS interpretation of the soul into Aristotle's discussion of active and passive intellect in *De Anima*; in actuality, what Hopkins says about active intellect has little connection to what Aristotle says. In short, the exposure to these ideas and texts is not as helpful as it could be because Hopkins's eagerness to cast them in a positive light leads him to mischaracterize them at times.

5. Though I will not pretend to be unbiased on this point, I consider it important primarily as an exercise of charity toward those with whom one disagrees. Such an exercise is more important as it appears in part 2, regarding the early Christians, since it relates more directly to our relationships with contemporary Christians who may passionately disagree with us.

Hopkins's summary of Parmenides' ideas is accurate enough for a book of this sort. The problem is that Hopkins writes as though metaphysical thought remained essentially Parmenidean thereafter. It is fair to say that Parmenides was the father of what we now call metaphysics, but Plato and Aristotle each dramatically transformed the field in their efforts to resolve Parmenides' paradoxes. Parmenides affirmed that the cosmos is in perfect unity and that the motion, change, and difference we experience are all illusory. Yet motion, change, and difference are all real, and disarming Parmenides' arguments to the contrary was a project for both Plato and Aristotle,⁶ though how successful they were at explaining change and difference without creating more paradox is a question for further discussion. Paradoxes reminiscent of those in Parmenides appear later, in Neoplatonic thought, which certainly influenced early Christian thought. Hence one might find some of Hopkins's remarks apt in reference to Neoplatonic metaphysics, but the facts do not support his treatment of Greek metaphysics as though it were all one.

Unfortunately, throughout his book Hopkins uses the term *metaphysics* mainly to mean the unabashed assertion of nonsense, justified by the doctrine that since the world of everyday experience is illusory, truth need not make sense in everyday terms—in other words, it need not make sense at all (see p. 115). At one point Hopkins characterizes the founding idea of metaphysics as “the Greek idea that reality is not real” (p. 211). This notion spares him the trouble of trying to make sense of many odd-sounding ideas that appear later in history, but it results in the seriously mistaken premise that their advocates had no intention of making sense. Notable among the ideas Hopkins dismisses in this way is the doctrine of the Trinity, which he describes as “openly irrational” (p. 189). This is hardly a statement calculated to win friends among Trinitarians.

Surprisingly, the brightest spot in Hopkins's history of philosophy is his discussion of Aristotle's conception of substance, or *ousia*—a

6. See, for example, Daniel W. Graham, *Aristotle's Two Systems* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1987), 124–27.

post-Parmenidean metaphysical notion that is influential in the Trinitarian view of the Godhead established at Nicea. He accurately distinguishes the three senses of substance that Aristotle recognizes: matter; form; and the concrete, individual thing that incorporates both matter and form. He even specifies correctly that the Nicene formula, stating that the Father and Son are of the same substance, uses the notion of substance in the sense of form.⁷ Unfortunately, he never puts this account of substance to use to explain the doctrine of the Trinity, even though this doctrine figures prominently in later sections of the book. While he repeatedly reminds us that much confusion has arisen over the years from misunderstanding the various senses of substance (see, e.g., pp. 190–91, 216), by the time Hopkins turns his attention to the doctrine of the Trinity, he seems to have forgotten that there were any different senses to distinguish and settles on a sense other than the one he refers to at first: he uses *substance* as though it refers to an individual thing (see, e.g., pp. 141, 189). An accurate portrayal of Trinitarian doctrine is crucial in a book on the Christian concept of God; I will revisit this issue below.

Another key influence on traditional Christian orthodoxy was “the adoption of *a priori* assumptions common among the Hellenized nations” (p. 208). I will discuss this idea now because it arguably belongs with the other Greek and Hellenistic influences discussed in part 1, though Hopkins addresses it at the beginning of part 3. Presumably the idea of a priori knowledge itself was not the immediate source of error. Rather, the sources of error were various particular ideas the early Christians took to be a priori truths. Hopkins cites the idea that God must be incorporeal as a main example (see pp. 206–7). Still, he focuses his attack on the very idea of a priori knowledge: “In order for a man’s thoughts [e.g., Greek philosophy] to generate truth about God, it must be presumed that *a priori* knowledge of Him is innate in Men, inde-

7. I do not mean to imply that the Nicene formula employs a strictly Aristotelian concept of substance. Rather, of the Aristotelian concepts of substance, the one that is compatible with the intent of the Nicene formula is substance as form or essence. See note 14 below.

pendent of any particular experience. . . . However, there is no scriptural authority for that notion” (p. 208).

This brusque claim is not a good beginning to Hopkins’s assessment. For one thing, earlier he found in Plato reason to believe one can “conceive or imagine the truth through the exercise of reason and imagination,” aside from revelation (p. 44)—that is, he found reason to believe in something like a priori knowledge. Moreover, scriptural authority strongly supports belief in something like a priori knowledge, both in the Bible and in modern revelation—namely, knowledge received by the light of Christ. John 1 refers to Christ as “the Word” (v. 1) and then as “the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world” (v. 9). Hopkins cites Romans 2:14–15 as an indication that this light, or conscience, gives only a sense of right and wrong; but while that scripture does identify that role, it does not cast doubt on the other role of the light of Christ—that of delivering eternal truths. Moreover, *Doctrine and Covenants* 93 expands John’s teaching in John 1, repeatedly referring to Christ as the spirit of truth (e.g., in vv. 9, 11, 23, and 26) and specifying that “truth is knowledge of things as they are, and as they were, and as they are to come” (v. 24). Knowledge we receive through the light of Christ gives us insight into eternal truths that transcend our mortal experience, much like a priori knowledge. Consider also how Paul seems to refer to some innate knowledge in saying, “The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God” (Romans 8:16). Thus Hopkins ignores many passages of scripture, and misrepresents others, by claiming that scripture gives no support to the idea of a priori knowledge.

Hopkins goes on to give several examples of a priori beliefs that have proven false, as if to undermine all a priori beliefs by association. It is not difficult to give such examples; however, one could also give many examples of obsolete scientific beliefs that were, in their day, supposedly based on empirical evidence, such as the belief that light is a wave in the ether. Yet the empirical scientific method is a good source of knowledge. Similarly, the fact that it has led to some false beliefs is hardly enough to discredit all a priori knowledge. Further, belief in a priori knowledge is alive today among philosophers who

have great respect for the achievements of empirical science. Thus, while pointing out the risks of making a priori claims is worthwhile, this is no substitute for assessing the individual merits of particular claims. I will later treat Hopkins's attempt in part 3 to argue specifically that corporeality is more fitting for God than incorporeality.

Hopkins points to a Greek tradition of allegorical interpretation as another source of corruption in early Christian belief. He claims that allegorical interpretation originated in Greek efforts to "find themes of goodness and virtue consistent with the new monotheism in the old pagan stories," which depicted a plurality of gods in anthropomorphic terms, complete with human vices (p. 75). As with a priori reasoning, the main mischief Hopkins attributes to allegorical interpretation is support for the idea that God is incorporeal—references to his face, hands, feet, and the like were interpreted as metaphorical allusions to other attributes, such as his approval, power, or changelessness (see, e.g., p. 76). Similar methods of interpretation were used to finesse other scriptural references to God, including texts that attribute to him such humanlike emotions as anger or regret.

By contrast with Greek interpretation, which is always labeled "allegorical," Hopkins refers to Hebrew methods of interpretation as either "literal" or "figurative," acknowledging that there is "figurative language used by the prophets in their statements about God" (p. 73). Hopkins does not explain what carefully drawn distinction allows him to approve of figurative interpretation while consistently disapproving of allegorical interpretation. As he employs the notion, though, the operative distinction is captured in statements like the following: "Some Greek exegetes became almost indifferent to the original meaning of the writer, interpreting all passages allegorically to suit their pet theories" (p. 76), or "The result was to impress on scripture the views of the interpreter, rather than the reverse process intended by God" (p. 77). This is a roundabout way to criticize the practice of simply wresting the scriptures to suit one's preconceptions. Using the term *allegorical* in this peculiar way, Hopkins leaves untouched the real and difficult question of how to know what scriptural language is to be read literally and what figuratively (or al-

legorically in its usual sense). “Allegorical interpretation” in the sense Hopkins uses it threatens to become any nonliteral interpretation that conflicts with one’s own view. Presumably, the real task is to assess the preconceptions that drive any given interpretation.

Thus part 1 has some real virtues—first, simply in familiarizing the reader with some basic ideas from Greek philosophy, and second, in cultivating openness to and appreciation of the fragments of truth to be found there. However, as an explanation of the Greek roots of error in traditional theology, it is unsatisfying. His account of substance would be helpful had Hopkins drawn upon it in his later discussion of the Trinity. His accounts of metaphysics, of the notion of a priori knowledge, and of the Hellenistic tradition of allegorical interpretation are confused and obstruct serious engagement with the Greek roots of Christian beliefs Hopkins means to criticize. These Christian traditional beliefs have their roots in particular metaphysical views, particular preconceptions that drive false interpretations, or particular claims that are taken to be a priori truths. Rather than explaining what is wrong with the various Greek ideas, Hopkins’s words *metaphysics*, *a priori*, and *allegorical interpretation* become little more than labels he uses to prematurely dismiss ideas he disagrees with.

Part 2

Part 2 is the most successful portion of this book. It introduces many of the key figures in the Christian community just after the deaths of the apostles, portrays their predicament, highlights truths they still possessed, and offers an explanation of why and how these truths were replaced by errors. As he had earlier done with the Greek philosophers, Hopkins now celebrates the efforts and achievements of the early Christians even though they also failed in many ways: “Perhaps the greatest testimony this book bears to Latter-day Saints is that they should not be critical or disparaging of these outstanding and well-meaning early leaders as they become acquainted with them in the pages that follow” (p. 30). After the intense persecutions that took the lives of the apostles, the early Christians were left without

proper leadership, were confused over which teachers and writings were trustworthy, and had no authority to resolve the many differences and disputes that arose.

Hopkins emphasizes the role of a group known as the Apologists, who were active in explaining and defending Christian faith during the second century. Though violent persecution had abated, the Apologists were pressed by critics of the church, many of whom were trained in Greek philosophy. In the process of answering these questions and challenges, and without proper guidance, the Apologists misconstrued some doctrines and fabricated others. In particular, as they tried to answer questions and challenges that were formulated from the perspective of philosophy, they were led to express Christian beliefs in the language of philosophy. Not knowing better, they often portrayed Christian beliefs as being more similar to the doctrines of the philosophers than they should have. Thus, rather than calling philosophy the cause of error, it may be appropriate to say that ignorance was the cause of erroneous beliefs and that philosophy simply filled the gap left when revelation ceased. I would love to see more Latter-day Saints exposed to this sort of account of how the early church fell into error. Too many LDS Sunday School lessons evoke only images of scheming priests tailoring doctrines and editing scriptures to suit their selfish purposes. The view Hopkins supports better helps us approach both past and present traditional Christians in love and fairness, as our brothers and sisters.

In part 2, as in part 1, Hopkins may be a bit too quick to draw parallels between the beliefs of early Christians and Latter-day Saint beliefs. Still, the Saints should be more aware of these interesting writings and should value the efforts of their authors. Becoming familiar with their names and reading some of their texts makes these authors human and helps to counterbalance the Latter-day Saint tendency to simply define that period of history with a single word—*apostasy*. With such a short history of our own and with our eyes always turned to our living prophets, Latter-day Saints may think of the true church as existing timelessly, in a perpetual present.

But while the gospel is timeless, our understanding of it is not, and we have much to gain from a careful study of Christian history. First, we can learn from powerful Christian writers in history, as we do from such insightful contemporaries as C. S. Lewis. Second, it would be instructive to examine the development of the Christian community as it spread and faced a variety of challenges over the centuries. We Latter-day Saints will face some of the same challenges as we more fully become a world church. Third, we should consider to what extent we are shaped by the Christian community in which the early members of the restored church were all raised and from which most of our numerous converts still come. Then, as now, converts bring old beliefs and habits with them, and we as a people may not have fully disentangled ourselves from false traditions. We have been chastised many times in our history for paying insufficient attention to the Book of Mormon. As traditional Christians read Greek presuppositions into the Bible, so some of us may be reading traditional Christian presuppositions into the Bible, the Book of Mormon, and our other modern revelations. For example, Latter-day Saint discussions of Christ's atonement often reflect a view of the atonement that appears to derive from the work of Anselm centuries ago and is difficult to reconcile with Alma's teachings in the Book of Mormon.⁸

While we are rightly mindful of the danger that studying erroneous traditions may lead one into error, we should also acknowledge that being ignorant of those traditions may keep us from recognizing how they have already shaped our beliefs. Recent attention among Latter-day Saints to the role of grace in our salvation often reflects a notion of grace as it is currently understood in Protestant circles, but I believe that the scriptural notion of grace is closer to a Catholic understanding of grace as found in the writings of Thomas Aquinas. In my view, modern revelation shows that neither the Protestant nor the Catholic view of grace is adequate, but without considering

8. While I do not agree with all his conclusions, Dennis Potter has an interesting treatment of this issue in "Did Christ Pay for Our Sins?" *Dialogue* 32/4 (1999): 73–86.

Aquinas's view I might never have realized that I needed to rethink the Protestant view I had inherited from my surrounding culture.

I applaud Hopkins's detailed attention to important early Christians like the Apologists. I also find his account of the basic causes of their theological error persuasive, though his discussion of the particular origins of this or that mistaken belief may be unsatisfying. Hopkins considers the historical evidence in only enough detail to illustrate how he envisions these causes operating; to argue convincingly that his view is historically correct would require a more thorough study.⁹ However, anyone who doubts Hopkins's basic account of how false doctrines entered the church through the work of the second-century Apologists may find it interesting to consider some features of Hopkins's own work as a modern apologist. Perhaps the most intriguing aspect of his book is that it displays some of the same tendencies he attributes to the work of the early Apologists during the first few centuries after the time of Christ. Thus the latter portion of the book might serve as a case study in support of the theory of error advanced in the earlier portion of the book. Examples of the following elements of the process of error appear in parts 3 and 4:

- *Hopkins appeals to the philosophy of the day to support his view of God, as did some early Christians.* Early Christians built respect for their views by showing them to be in harmony with prevailing Hellenistic philosophical views. For example, they identified Christ with the Logos, or Word, so important in Stoic and other Greek thought, and they took an incorporealist view of God that fit with the Greek view of matter as corrupt. Hopkins, for his part, appeals to modern science and mathematics to deflect traditional Christian objections to Latter-day Saint cosmology. He also appeals to the modern view of the relationship of matter to energy to argue that God is better understood as corporeal than incorporeal.

- *Beyond simply supporting the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets by an appeal to science, Hopkins interprets them in*

9. Presumably part of the job is done by Edwin Hatch in *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), which Hopkins cites frequently.

terms of ideas drawn from contemporary science (the philosophy of our day). Again, this is similar to how he portrays early Christians, who interpreted their beliefs in terms of the philosophy of their day.

- *Hopkins represents the Latter-day Saint position on certain points in a way that is convenient for the discussion he has entered but is not authoritative,* just as the early Christian Apologists took it upon themselves to answer questions that were pressed on them, even though no clear answers were to be found in the authoritative sources they possessed. In order to present a focused opposition to the traditional Christian views he cites, Hopkins takes controversial positions regarding the human conscience, God's omniscience, the relation of human freedom to divine providence, God's relationship to space and time, and the Edenic creation. All these views involve his own speculation, beyond what can be supported with authoritative Latter-day Saint sources. He also frequently represents the scriptures as upholding his view much more obviously than they do, such as in his discussion of God's transcendence. In the case of conscience, or the light of Christ, which I discuss above in relation to a priori knowledge, Hopkins misrepresents both ancient and modern scripture to support his idiosyncratic view.

It is essential to realize that each of these basic tendencies (as identified above in italics) is a legitimate way to approach the work of apologetics, or the work of building understanding with those of differing beliefs. I will argue this point at greater length below. These tendencies do not necessarily lead to error, but they may; and all of them arguably did, both in the early church and, on a smaller scale, in Hopkins's book. Of course, some mistakes are sure to appear in any human undertaking, and what allowed the second-century Apologists' errors to mislead the entire church was the absence of continuing revelation and proper priesthood leadership.

These examples boost the plausibility of Hopkins's view of how the early church fell into error long ago. If they occur in his own work, similar developments could understandably have occurred in the work of the early Apologists. Perhaps more important, these examples show that the same causes could easily lead to problems today

if Latter-day Saint thinkers are not careful. As the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints becomes less a Rocky Mountain fortress and more a global church, we become engaged in projects similar to those of the ancient Apologists: we increasingly seek acceptance and mutual understanding from those of other faiths and from the secular world. Hence we should be wary of repeating the mistakes the Apologists made, as Hopkins does at times. I will elaborate on these examples in the latter part of my discussion of parts 3 and 4.

Parts 3 and 4

In part 3, Hopkins turns to a number of traditional Christian beliefs about God as they stand today. In the earlier sections he has sketched explanations for error: loss of revelation, pressures to assimilate Greek ways of thinking, various influential strands of Greek thought, and so forth. The task of part 3 is to show more particularly what beliefs arose from these influences and that such beliefs are, in fact, mistaken.

Problems of Polemicism

Unfortunately, this section is chronically unpersuasive and, what is worse, frequently discourteous to those whose views it attacks. In many cases Hopkins seriously understates the plausibility of views he disagrees with. Sometimes he is simply inaccurate in explaining the belief he opposes. More often he fails to acknowledge what makes the belief reasonable. Hopkins also habitually overstates his own case. Not only does each of these problems prevent him from being persuasive, but their sheer frequency suggests a serious lack of respect for his opponents. Moreover, in several places Hopkins more directly implies that his traditional Christian opponents are insincere or intellectually irresponsible. Perhaps my comments will serve in part as a sort of apology to those Hopkins has offended.

Inaccuracy. The discussion of the doctrine of the Trinity—particularly the belief that the members of the Godhead are consubstantial—is perhaps the most prominent example of inaccuracy in explain-

ing a belief. This inaccuracy is particularly irksome because at certain points Hopkins goes to some effort to acknowledge that the doctrine is subtle (see pp. 19–91, 216),¹⁰ but when he actually tries to explain it, he ignores that subtlety. Moreover, this is a crucial doctrine, and Hopkins revisits it repeatedly without improvement. While he refers to the words in which it is traditionally stated, he does not acknowledge, let alone explain, their intended sense. For example, he alleges:

The elements of this doctrine are directly contradictory in a real space-time universe, but each was considered essential. They are (1) *the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are three entirely separate persons*; and (2) *the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are one singular substance (ousia)*. (pp. 141–42)

Here, Hopkins's verbal statement of the two elements is acceptable, though some might prefer to say that the members of the Godhead are *of* one substance. Yet everything rides on capturing the proper sense of *substance*, which Hopkins fails to do. The way in which he prefaces the statement suggests that the sense of substance in this context is *individual thing*, so that three persons are described as one individual thing.¹¹ Hopkins thus casts Trinitarians as self-consciously making a pair of claims that cannot both hold in one world: one or both must be understood as holding true only in an alternate, metaphysical world—the “unreal reality” (p. 141) on which Hopkins erroneously centers his account of metaphysics.¹² Yet, as it is intended in the statement of the doctrine of the Trinity—and as observed in the above discussion of Parmenidean and post-Parmenidean metaphysics—*substance* does not mean exclusively an individual thing. Thus Hopkins badly misrepresents the

10. Indeed, Hopkins makes use of an interesting sense of *substance* in giving his account of the LDS view of the relationship of the Father and Son (see pp. 198, 231–32), but he allows no such flexibility to Trinitarians.

11. It seems reasonable to claim this would be a contradiction, but one might still have doubts. A chess set, for example, would seem to be both one thing and many things. How about a basketball team?

12. Likewise on page 231: “Metaphysics allowed the Apologists the illusion of rational thought in the formulation of this doctrine.”

doctrine. Many traditional Christians misunderstand their own doctrine in much the way Hopkins does, but it remains a misunderstanding and should not be perpetuated.

In fact, the term *substance* is subtle and can be used in a variety of senses. Further, the study of these senses belongs to metaphysics. Yet there is much more to metaphysics than Hopkins acknowledges, including much that belongs to common sense. Consider this dialogue for illustration:

Q: What is in this box?

A: A copper wire, a copper bracelet, and a copper coin.

Q: How many things are in the box?

A: Three.

Q: How many substances are in the box?

A: One; the things are all copper.

There is nothing puzzling about this use of *substance*; it would be at home in a high school science classroom. Yet in this case, there is clearly no contradiction when we state, parallel to Hopkins's statement of the doctrine of Trinity:

1. The wire, the bracelet, and the coin are three separate objects or things, and
2. The wire, the bracelet, and the coin are one substance.

Thus Hopkins is too quick in claiming a contradiction between elements (1) and (2) of the doctrine of the Trinity: being three things can be compatible with being one substance. Of course, God is not a mineral. Trinitarians have a different sense of substance in mind; my point is that there are several to choose from.¹³

Because Hopkins disregards the variety of meanings that adhere to the term *substance*, he fails to properly identify the traditional doctrine of consubstantiality, let alone to criticize it effectively. Ad-

13. In fact, there appears to be a variety of ways Trinitarians understand the doctrine of consubstantiality: even the bishops who participated in the Council of Nicea were divided over the choice of the word *homoousios* and were not in consensus as to what it meant. Robert Jenson, *The Triune Identity* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982), 86.

mittedly, traditional Christians often have trouble explaining it, and they do not all agree, but this is no justification for Hopkins's casual dismissal. A critic, more than anyone, has a responsibility to identify properly that which he means to criticize.¹⁴

Acknowledging too little. A more pervasive problem is the misrepresentation of scriptural grounds for the various traditional Christian beliefs. Hopkins habitually examines fewer scriptural passages than could be cited to support the traditional views; sometimes he claims a complete lack of scriptural support. For example, returning to the doctrine of consubstantiality, Hopkins alleges, "The only verse in the Bible that sounds remotely Trinitarian, 1 John 5:7, has been rejected by scholars as a later addition to the text" (p. 244). This claim is embarrassingly inaccurate since anyone conversant with the Bible can identify many verses that at least *sound* Trinitarian: "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father" (John 14:9), "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30), and "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1) are only three of them. Moreover, Hopkins's eagerness to discount 1 John 5:7 is ill-suited to a Latter-day Saint since several Book of Mormon passages sound even more Trinitarian (I will return to this point below). Something like consubstantiality seems to be at work in many biblical passages about persons other than God, as when Christ says of husband and wife, "they are no more twain, but one flesh" (Matthew 19:6), or when the

14. At this point, having defended the traditional Christian view against Hopkins, perhaps I should say a few words to clarify my own position. My own objection to the Nicene statements about the Godhead is less with the particular statements themselves than with their status as a creed and with their obscurity. The Book of Mormon explicitly teaches that the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are one God. I suspect there is a meaningful sense of *substance* according to which they are one substance, or at least are *of* one substance. For starters, they are one heavenly government, and they are of one mind and one will. I believe the main inadequacy of the traditional Christian understanding of the Godhead is that it does not reflect how fully God's other children can join in the Godhead's unity. The LDS perspective on the Godhead is preferable most of all because it reflects just how much like God, and how unified with him, his children can become. As Christ reflects in his intercessory prayer, "That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us" (John 17:21).

creation story says, “Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam” (Genesis 5:2).

Similarly, Hopkins says of a priori knowledge: “there is no scriptural authority for that notion” (p. 208). Yet several New Testament scriptures, as well as a much more extended passage in Doctrine and Covenants 93, seem to refer to something of the kind, as I explain when discussing part 1. Again, as Hopkins considers in what sense Christ was begotten or created by the Father, he states, “Nothing in the Bible even suggests that Christ was ‘generated’” (p. 239). Yet three sentences later he refers to the biblical Greek term *monogenes*, meaning “only child.” The English term *generation* and its relatives are all lexical descendants of the same Greek root and refer precisely to the distinctive process whereby children are produced. Hopkins, who emphasizes that Christ was begotten by God, should have no complaint about the term *generated*.

While Hopkins seriously understates the scriptural support for various traditional Christian beliefs, he also is often too quick to read scriptural passages as supporting his own view, as I illustrate below when considering Hopkins’s interpretation of scripture in terms of science and other dubious presentations of Latter-day Saint doctrine. In all these examples, Hopkins seems more eager to contradict his opponents than to convey the truth about the scriptures. In considering the traditional Christian idea that God is a radically different sort of being from humans, and before laying out his criticisms, Hopkins says flatly, “There is no biblical basis for this doctrine” (p. 394). Again, Hopkins’s claim is completely untenable. Many passages in the Bible emphasize the great differences between God and his mortal children. Two passages from the Old Testament come to mind right away. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts” (Isaiah 55:9). The difference in height between the heavens and the earth suggests far more than a mere matter of degree: what could be more different in height from the earth than the heavens? More directly: “And also the Strength of Israel [God] will not lie nor repent: for he is not a man, that he should repent” (1 Samuel 15:29). If this sentence does

not appear to suggest that God is a different kind of being from a man, what would? Other examples could be brought forward in support of the traditional view. Of course, I believe that a careful reading of the Bible as a whole softens the meaning of these passages and ultimately supports the Latter-day Saint view. In particular, the description of us as God's children should be understood to mean that we are rudimentary instances of the same type of being. Still, to insist that the Bible provides no basis for the traditional belief is to ignore the obvious.

Insensitivity. Further, this claim is likely to alienate any self-respecting traditional Christian and to disturb a sensitive Latter-day Saint reader. For not only is the claim false, but it also implies a charge of bad faith. A reasonable Christian should pay attention to whether core beliefs such as this one have a basis in the Bible. The claim that there is no biblical support for differences between God and man thus implies that those who believe this doctrine are irresponsible in the adoption of their beliefs. It is bad form for a scholar to say an insensitive thing like this at all, let alone when it is factually untenable.

Early in this review I referred to Hopkins's comparison of traditional Christians to the Pharisees of Christ's time. To lightly call someone a hypocrite is bad, and to call one an idolater is presumably worse; but Hopkins does not flinch: "The idea that God is incorporeal is the very essence of idolatry" (p. 274). Certainly, some traditional Christians have compared the Latter-day Saint belief that God is corporeal to idolatry, but one unreasonable and offensive allegation does not excuse another. In his eagerness to press this upsetting claim, Hopkins becomes incoherent. On one page he asserts, "The gods of idol worshippers see, and hear and smell in exactly the same way the God of classical theism does—without benefit of sensory organs" (p. 274), only to refer on the next to idols as "the work of man's hands, wood and stone, *which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell*" (p. 275, quoting Deuteronomy 4:28). He seems prepared to represent idols as seeing or not seeing, hearing or not hearing, as it may suit his argument from one point to the next. It is unfortunate that such uncharitable ranting should obscure a truly interesting argument from

scripture that God is indeed corporeal, that he not only sees, hears, and smells but even eats. Indeed, the classic Old Testament criticism of idols appears to presuppose that the true God does these things, as idols do not.

Seeds of Error

I have illustrated how Hopkins repeatedly misrepresents traditional Christian belief and its basis in scripture and how his remarks are often insensitive or worse. I now turn to a set of more ambiguous points about parts 3 and 4, in which Hopkins's work exemplifies key elements of the very process of error he describes in part 2 as leading to apostasy in the early church. I consider most of the examples I cite to be failures insofar as they were meant to defend Latter-day Saint belief. However, they provide interesting support for Hopkins's view of how the mistaken beliefs took hold.

Initially, I highlight instances in which Hopkins offers as support for his claims—including Latter-day Saint beliefs—the argument that they harmonize with contemporary scientific views. As Hopkins portrays them, the Apologists tried to improve Christianity's reception in the dominant Hellenistic culture by emphasizing its harmony with the prevailing Hellenistic philosophical views where possible. This was a reasonable thing to do then and is so now. Truth will harmonize with truth, and we should recognize truth wherever it is found. Indeed, the great missionaries Paul (e.g., Acts 17:23) and Aaron (Alma 22:9–11) both used a similar technique, appealing to ideas familiar to their audiences to introduce their message. Without the guidance of the Holy Spirit, however, it does have dangers. One is that the credibility of revealed truth can be damaged in the long run by seeming to rely on foreign philosophical or scientific claims that may prove to be false. A graver peril is that, in the process of parsing one's beliefs about God in terms that can be related to scientific theories, one may distort those beliefs. Hopkins claims that the Apologists distorted the truth as they parsed their beliefs about God in terms of Greek philosophy. Similarly, I will examine instances in which

Hopkins interprets Latter-day Saint theology or scriptures in terms of ideas taken from modern science and technology, arguably distorting those scriptures in the process.

In other cases Hopkins represents the Latter-day Saint position on certain points in a way that is convenient for the discussion he has entered but is not authoritative. In these cases, it is not science but some other feature of Hopkins's agenda that leads to the distortion. Again, it is reasonable—even inevitable—that in discussing the nature of God one will face questions to which one has not received an authoritative answer. It is often appropriate to answer these questions if one acknowledges that the answer is one's personal view. Indeed, even the authors of scripture do this on occasion. The problems arise when unauthoritative views conflict with, are mistaken for, or supplant authoritative teachings. Throughout this section I will also comment on whether Hopkins's arguments against his opponents are cogent.

Appeals to Science. Appealing to modern science in criticizing the metaphysical notions behind the traditional Christian conception of God, Hopkins asserts, "Modern science provides no support whatever for the metaphysical notion of a timeless eternity outside the real universe" (pp. 211–12). This is an empty assessment that passes too quickly even to verify that it makes a relevant claim. For one thing, the Parmenidean metaphysics he has described is not the metaphysics behind the traditional Christian view of God; for another, it is not certain what sort of support we should expect from modern science for *any* metaphysical view, since science generally investigates particular empirical phenomena. Still, this statement illustrates Hopkins's reliance, legitimate or not, on the authority of modern science.

Hopkins makes a similarly vague appeal to scientific authority to more specifically support his claim that three persons cannot be one individual thing: "Both scientists and philosophers recognize that the idea of a personal being, as opposed to a legal entity, involves a distinct *center of consciousness* that has a specific location in time and space. This understanding of personality simply does not fit into the makeup of a being like that imagined in the Trinity of classical theism" (p. 225).

Presumably, some scientists and philosophers would subscribe to this view of personhood, but Hopkins does not say who, and there is certainly no consensus to this effect among philosophers. Moreover, it is doubtful that this question lies within the scope of authority of any coalition of scientists or philosophers; for while it may be clear what it means for a human body or a brain to have a location in time and space, it is far from clear what it would mean for a “center of consciousness” to have such a location. Where is a person’s center of consciousness when that person is contemplating the events of creation or is asleep? The empirically minded might insist that it is always in the brain or body, but this assumes that a person must be corporeal, which is precisely one of the questions in dispute in a discussion of the Godhead.

Hopkins makes a more involved call upon modern mathematics to support certain points of Latter-day Saint cosmology that have come under criticism: “Modern mathematics has shown that the finite and the infinite are not so far removed from each other as the ancient Greeks supposed” (p. 401). Hopkins responds specifically to Beckwith’s formulation of these criticisms, which is in some ways reminiscent of ancient Greek reflections on the infinite. While he correctly states that Beckwith’s criticisms of Latter-day Saint views do not stand up in the light of modern mathematics, his own defense fares little better, for he gets key points of the mathematics wrong. Indeed, many of Hopkins’s and Beckwith’s arguments have been obsolete since the Middle Ages, when al-Ghazali, Maimonides, and Thomas Aquinas thoroughly studied questions like this about space and time. This is hardly the place for a complete exposition of the mathematics of infinity or the topology of beginnings and ends, but I will give examples of key confusions in Hopkins’s discussion: Beckwith argues that the Latter-day Saint understanding of eternal progression implies the present existence of infinitely many gods and intelligences, and he objects to this implication. Hopkins responds by claiming that “In the real universe . . . there could be an infinite number of ‘kingdoms,’ and each of those kingdoms could be infinite in dimension.” He argues for this as follows:

Not only can infinite space be divided into an *infinite* number of infinitesimal points, it can include an infinite number of *finite* spatial segments (e.g., sixteen-cubic-inch cubes). Each of these segments has at least one finite measurement (length, area or volume), but in infinite space it does not matter how big or how small those finite measurements are. They could even be infinitely large or infinitely small. (pp. 402–3)

Here Hopkins simply ignores the distinction between the finite and the infinite. There is no such thing as an infinitely large finite measurement: *infinite* means “not finite.”¹⁵ Hopkins goes on to draw several convenient consequences from this nonsensical claim.

Beckwith also objects to the Latter-day Saint belief that the universe has no beginning. Hopkins counters that it is “fundamentally irrational” to believe that the universe does have a beginning (and hence that there is a beginning of time). He argues:

If, in the classical view of heaven, there was no time before the creation of the sensory universe, either events would have to occur without any chronological order, or God would have to be doing absolutely nothing. The latter notion is inconsistent with the character and attributes of the God described in the Bible, and the former idea is impossible. (p. 415)

Perhaps Hopkins is right to exclude the option of events occurring without chronological order, but the alternative is reasonable—not exactly that God would be doing nothing, but that there would be no change. Time is the measure of change: We can only judge the passing of time by observing changes, such as the motion of the sun or of the hands of a clock, or the turning of the leaves in autumn. Thus, if God’s activity were unchanging, there might be no time. In fact, traditional Christians typically claim that God is and has always

15. It would be appropriate to say, “These finite measurements could be *indefinitely* large,” meaning that for any finite size one picks, they could be bigger; but *indefinitely large* is not *infinitely large*.

been unchanging in essential respects and that time only makes sense in relation to created things, which do change. They draw upon scriptures like Malachi 3:6, which says, “For I am the Lord, I change not,” or James 1:17, which refers to “the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness.” Similar statements appear in the Book of Mormon, such as in Mormon 9:9. Thus Hopkins once again dismisses the opposing view prematurely.¹⁶ Of course, Beckwith’s arguments that there must be a beginning to time are also unconvincing, but not for the reasons Hopkins gives.

Hopkins cites various facts of neurology in a speculation on the suitability of the human brain for holding Godlike knowledge (see p. 321). He refers to developments in “Gestalt psychology” to support his view of how resurrected humans might progress toward omniscience (see p. 435). He pauses for an especially elusive comment on the colorful topic of the quantum structure of vacuum (see pp. 286–87). He refers to modern telecommunications to support his view that God is omnipresent despite having a specific spatial location (see pp. 316, 340–42). In all these cases, Hopkins tends to mischaracterize the claims of science or mathematics to support his understanding of revealed truths, rather than the other way around. Thus his appeals to the received wisdom of his day seem less likely to lead to a corruption of revealed truth than those of the early Christian Apologists did. Still, he presents some odd renderings of Latter-day Saint beliefs along the way, such as when he alludes to infinite intervals between events in spiritual progression or marks the distinction between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in terms of centers of consciousness—a notion whose connection with scripture is dubious. These are the sorts of renderings that could lead to distortions of revealed truth if they were more plausible.

Parsing of Scripture and Doctrine in Terms of Science. In other cases Hopkins seems so bent on interpreting revelation in terms of

16. Again, my own view on these questions differs from the view of traditional Christians, but I do not attribute their view to irrationality or intellectual carelessness; I attribute it to their lacking the benefits of modern revelation.

modern science that he disregards the integrity both of revelation and of science. For example, as a prelude to addressing Beckwith's criticisms of Latter-day Saint cosmology, Hopkins rehearses a number of surprising points in the mathematical theory of infinite sets. During this rehearsal he distinguishes two orders of infinity: the order of the natural, or of the rational numbers; and the order of the real numbers, or of the points in a continuous space, plane, or line. Hopkins alleges that God has the distinction between these two orders of infinity in mind in several scriptural passages:

Indeed, it is the meaning of God's reference to the sands of the sea as "innumerable" (e.g., Gen. 22:17; Jer. 33:22; Heb. 11:12). The "sands of the sea" is simply an analogy that refers to "the number of points in the universe [or in a continuous space]." (p. 403; cf. 427)

Hopkins offers no support for this claim. Though connecting the word of God with the most obscure pronouncements of science may impress some readers, this claim is quite baseless. First, there is no indication that the Hebrews had language to distinguish orders of infinity; second, it is hard to imagine why God would care to distinguish between orders of infinity in his communication with the Hebrews; third, mathematically speaking, the sands of the sea are not analogous to the points of the universe in this respect. Since grains of sand are finite in size (even if there are infinitely many grains of sand), the grains are countably infinite, like the natural or rational numbers, rather than uncountably infinite, like the points of space.

Though there is no substance to these appeals to mathematics and science, one can see why Hopkins would be powerfully drawn to make them and how they would have a significant effect on readers who are unaware of their error. It would be surprising if the early Christian Apologists did not succumb to similar temptations and sometimes distort both philosophy and revelation as a result.

A use of science that leads to a more disturbing rendering of Latter-day Saint belief is Hopkins's attempt to support the belief that God is corporeal by drawing upon Einstein's celebrated equation for

mass-energy equivalence, $E=mc^2$. Admittedly, the high esteem in which Latter-day Saints hold matter, as expressed in Doctrine and Covenants 93:33, fits more easily with modern scientific views than Platonic views do. Yet though this appeal to $E=mc^2$ may be impressive or entertaining to some readers, as a piece of reasoning it is a total failure.¹⁷

Hopkins's basic line of reasoning is as follows (see pp. 308–9):

1. A particle of matter at rest represents an amount of energy (E) equal to the particle's mass (m) times the speed of light (c) squared ($E=mc^2$).

2. The speed of light is 3×10^{10} cm/s.

3. The speed of light squared is 9×10^{20} cm²/s².

4. Thus a unit of mass represents 9×10^{20} units of energy.

5. Thus a being made of matter would be 9×10^{20} times as powerful as a being made of energy.

6. Thus a corporeal state, as in Latter-day Saint belief, is more worthy of God than an incorporeal state, as in traditional Christian belief.

There are multiple serious problems with this reasoning. First, to represent God's power by a finite, calculable quantity of energy is wholly inadequate. The fact that energy and power are not the same thing, scientifically speaking, may be the least of Hopkins's difficulties. More important is the fact that the scientific notions of energy, mass, and power all have little to do with the kind of power we ascribe to God, or to almost anything, in usual speech. Which corporeal entity, for instance, is more powerful: a 20-ton heap of sand (the most massive), a 3/4-ton sports car, a 500-pound bomb, a few ounces of weapons-grade anthrax, or a sincere note written in a difficult hour (the least massive)? For these items we hardly think of mass as the index of power; for God it is surely even less relevant.

Any quantity of energy, scientifically speaking, or power, which is the rate of output of energy, is of dubious relevance when considering God's power. God made the sun, which radiates energy equivalent to

17. Delivered in the right tone of voice, this argument might be a creative and effective satire of some of the philosophical arguments that a corporeal state would be unworthy of God. Unfortunately, in its context I doubt most readers will hear it in that way.

millions of metric tons of mass each second. The energy represented by the mass of a human body would not fuel the sun for an eye blink, and yet Christ is the light of the sun and of the stars (see D&C 88:7–9). Thus, clearly the particular mass of God’s body is no indication of how powerful he is. Moreover, this immense outpouring of energy in the sun and stars is not his most wonderful power. How much energy, scientifically speaking, does it take to purify a human heart? Clearly these scientific concepts are of little use in considering the power of God, even though he is corporeal. To attempt to apply them suggests a lack of appreciation of the wonder of God’s power.

Second, the traditional Christian God simply is not a being of energy as physicists use the term. The comparison may have value as a metaphor, and certainly God is the source of light and other energy. Yet from a Platonic perspective, for example, energy in the physicist’s sense belongs clearly to the realm of matter: it moves through space and changes form dramatically, as God does not. The traditional Christian God is not “composed of pure energy” (p. 308). He is not “composed of” any other thing; he is the source of everything. Thus Hopkins’s comparison of matter to energy tells us nothing about the nature of the traditional Christian God, and his argument against such an incorporeal God thus has no force.

One might hope to find that the third problem is a misunderstanding of some subtlety of relativistic dynamics, but it is much more basic. Hopkins’s reasoning involves a misunderstanding of the role of units in an equation, a concept carefully treated in a forum no less arcane than the average high school physics class. Essentially, the mistake occurs in separating the numbers involved in the equation from the units in which the various quantities are expressed. This is like trying to tell which of two rulers is the longer merely by asking what number it ends with. Of course, a ruler that ends with “30” (centimeters) may simply be the flip side of a ruler that ends in “12” (inches). The fact that a distance of 100 yards is expressed with a larger number does not mean that it refers to a distance longer than 2 miles. In gauging an actual quantity, knowing the unit is as crucial as knowing the number.

When Hopkins says, “it would require nearly 900 quintillion (900,000,000,000,000,000,000) units of energy to be equivalent to just one unit of mass” (p. 308), he neglects to acknowledge that this number depends entirely on the choice of units. Many different units are used to measure energy, as well as to measure mass or linear distance or speed. If he had chosen to express the speed of light in kilometers per second, he would have derived a ratio of only 90 billion (90,000,000,000) to 1. If he had expressed it in astronomical units (the average distance from the earth to the sun) per hour, he would have derived a ratio of about 52 to 1. If he had expressed it in light-years per second ($c=3.17\times 10^{-8}$ ly/s), he would have found his result reversed: it requires 1 quadrillion (10^{15}), or 1,000,000,000,000,000 units of mass, to equal one unit of energy. How many units of mass equal one unit of energy simply depends on the arbitrary choice of units; it says nothing about the relative “power” of matter and energy.

That an argument involving such an elementary error should appear in print at all is disturbing. It is also troubling that Hopkins expresses the speed of light in units that seem chosen to boost the number generated by his flawed reasoning. Among a great variety of units one might use to express the speed of light, the most standard are either meters per second or centimeters per second. Convenient to Hopkins’s purpose, choosing centimeters per second instead of meters per second as the unit for the speed of light—the c in Einstein’s equation—adds four zeroes onto the end of the number the calculation produces (100^2). The choice of units thus increases “the ratio of corporeality to incorporeality” (p. 309) by a factor of 10,000, boosting one’s impression of how much more powerful a corporeal God would supposedly be than an incorporeal God. One worries that his might be a deliberate effort to inflate an argument that lacks rational substance of its own. With its distorted representations of God and his power, and of the implications of science, this argument easily compares with the distortions of truth Hopkins attributes to the early Christian Apologists.

Dubious or Problematic Presentation of Doctrine. If Hopkins’s use of science in his reasoning is problematic, it must be said that his

representations of the Latter-day Saint position on certain points are just as precarious. In some instances, what he says is consistent with authoritative Latter-day Saint teaching, but in others it is not.

On the subjects of God's omniscience, his foreknowledge, and the relationship of human freedom to divine providence, Hopkins takes positions that are reasonable and theologically acceptable for a Latter-day Saint to take, although they are somewhat controversial (see pp. 313–15, 317–18). Some Latter-day Saints would take different positions, all more or less equally compatible with modern revelation. However, in the course of explaining how LDS belief differs from classical theism, Hopkins frequently takes just one of a few views open to Latter-day Saints, presenting it as though it were the only viable view.

For example, in opposing the traditional view that God is outside of time, Hopkins criticizes the view that God has direct knowledge of future events. He maintains instead that God knows the future because he can predict it based on his knowledge of past and present events and of his own plans. However, another Latter-day Saint might hold that God, while acting in time, knows the future directly in much the same way as he knows the present: "all things are present before mine eyes" (D&C 38:1). In a situation like this it would be better to acknowledge the variety of views that Latter-day Saints may reasonably take. Paradoxically, Hopkins cites a drive toward unification of belief as one of the factors that accelerated the apostasy among the early Christians (see p. 147). When the points on which unity was pursued could not be resolved through inspiration, people became unified in error, rather than holding a variety of views among which the truth was still to be found. It would be fitting, then, for Hopkins to more readily acknowledge and respect variation in belief among Latter-day Saints.

Hopkins is particularly emphatic about unity of belief among Latter-day Saints in his rejection of Beckwith's five-point summary of Latter-day Saint theology. He claims that "with the exception of one or two statements, the entire Mormon Church would stand in disagreement with Dr. Beckwith's summary of its teachings" (p. 23). Though some would disagree, I also know thoughtful and faithful

Latter-day Saints who agree with all five points of Beckwith's summary. Though Hopkins denies Beckwith's contention that "both the later writings of Joseph Smith and current Mormon orthodoxy clearly assert these five points" (as cited in Hopkins, p. 23), he does not address the issue with argument. As it happens, in the course of his book Hopkins himself eventually grants four of the five points and concedes most of the fifth.

In other cases Hopkins presents a view that is very problematic for a Latter-day Saint to take. Hopkins's zeal leads him to misrepresent the scriptures' teaching on two rather important points: the light of Christ and the purpose of the Edenic creation. In my discussion of part 1 above, I examined how Hopkins seriously distorts the scriptural teachings about conscience, or the light of Christ, in Romans 2 and in Doctrine and Covenants 93 when he attacks the Greek notion of a priori knowledge. He seems to approach these passages with his mind already made up as to what they should say, much like the ancient practitioners of allegorical interpretation whom he criticizes elsewhere.

Further, in critiquing the traditional Christian sense of the gap between God the creator and his creatures, Hopkins claims that the creation was perfect as it was first created. He argues purely from one phrase used in Genesis: "When He finished the earth and all that He created in it, He pronounced it 'very good.' . . . For God, a perfect being, that statement can only be taken as an indication that His creation was perfect." He further claims, "What God made was perfect, not inferior, and it was meant to last forever" (p. 238). It is rather bold to equate "very good" with "perfect" on no other basis than this. This inference is made even more dubious by the fact that the first humans chose the path of disobedience. They were part of God's creation, but evidently their wills, at least, were imperfect.

Moreover, Hopkins's claim conflicts with the Latter-day Saint understanding of the Edenic state and the fall. According to Abraham 3:24–26, a key part of God's purpose in creating the earth and placing his children on it was to test their obedience, opening to them the possibility of a stage of development much greater than just the embodiment Adam and Eve received in Eden. Second Nephi 2:22–25

further clarifies that the fall was necessary for this plan to go forward: if not for the fall Adam and Eve would have had no children, “wherefore they would have remained in a state of innocence, having no joy.” Yet joy is a crucial part of God’s plan for us: “Adam fell that men might be; and men are, that they might have joy.” God did not intend his creations to remain forever in the state in which he left them when he pronounced them “very good” in Genesis 1. Rather, the mortal state that all earthly life entered through the fall of Adam was a necessary phase leading to one even more perfect than the idyllic Eden. Mistakes on fundamental points like this, uncorrected, led the early Christians into apostasy.

In his effort to distance himself from traditional Christian Trinitarians, Hopkins goes so far as to call into question the authenticity of 1 John 5:7, which he sees as the most Trinitarian-sounding verse in the Bible. It reads: “For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.” Apparently, Hopkins is uncomfortable with the statement that the three members of the Godhead are one. Indeed, in my experience many Latter-day Saints are uncomfortable with this way of speaking because it sounds reminiscent of traditional Trinitarianism. This is problematic, however, because it leads us to be selective in reading not just the Bible, but even the Book of Mormon. Consider 2 Nephi 31:21: “And now, behold, this is the doctrine of Christ, and the only and true doctrine of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, which is one God, without end.” Alma 11:44 similarly refers to these three as “one Eternal God,” and Mosiah 15:4–5 twice calls the Father and Son “one God.” To top it off, when Christ says in 3 Nephi 11:36, “the Father, and I, and the Holy Ghost are one,” he is affirming that the other members of the Godhead will bear record of him and of the doctrine he is presenting; in other words, his point is exactly parallel to the point of 1 John 5:7. Clearly, Hopkins’s attempt to discount 1 John 5:7 for sounding too Trinitarian is a mistake. This type of mistake is very tempting for an apologist in any century, and we must beware of it.

It is interesting to note that whereas the general drift of error among Christians after the deaths of the apostles was to assimilate their views to those of Hellenistic philosophy, Hopkins's tendency is to exaggerate differences between the Latter-day Saint view and the traditional Christian view. Thus his tendency in expressing unauthoritative views is opposite to theirs. However, error in either direction is destructive. Whether we draw nearer to or farther from our opponents through overzealous apologetics, if we neglect the message of revelation, we fall into error.

My examples hardly exhaust the problems with Hopkins's text. I present them as points calling for correction in their own right but also as illustrations of the generally polemical construction of parts 3 and 4. At times Hopkins's drive to disagree with classical theists overpowers his attention to the integrity of his own Latter-day Saint tradition and belief. Even in cases in which Hopkins is merely unpersuasive, the sheer number of times he raises a thesis and dismisses it too quickly suggests disrespect for our traditional Christian brothers and sisters. And by heaping up masses of unconvincing arguments, I fear that he actually makes the Latter-day Saint view look less plausible.

Reflections

The overall format of Hopkins's presentation is well chosen, beginning with highlights of Greek philosophy, looking with some care at the period following the deaths of the original apostles, and, with that historical and conceptual background, proceeding to a closer examination of the various doctrinal disagreements between traditional Christianity and the restored church. The history helps one understand the contemporary debate, besides being interesting in its own right. The charitable tone of Hopkins's history also represents a very welcome corrective to the dismissive manner prevalent in popular Latter-day Saint discussions of the few centuries following the deaths of the original apostles. Unfortunately, in some of its details Hopkins's presentation is still disappointing.

We Latter-day Saints need a book like this one aspires to be. However, we need a book that proceeds much more cautiously and shows a much greater attention to and respect for opposing views, neither co-opting them prematurely (as in parts 1 and 2 of Hopkins's book) nor dismissing them prematurely (as in parts 3 and 4). It should acknowledge how much of traditional Christian thought is reasonable for someone without the benefits of modern revelation. It should not only be accurate in characterizing individual opposing views, but it should address the great variety of views to be found in traditional Christianity. It should acknowledge the major views present not only in recent evangelical thought, such as Beckwith represents, but in Roman Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, and other Protestant thought, both now and historically. To vindicate the teachings of the restoration, it is not enough to discredit just one of the many traditional views. Further, the agenda of this book should be set in response to great thinkers—such as Augustine, Aquinas, Luther, and Calvin, who represent the best traditional Christianity has to offer—rather than to minor contemporaries.

The work I am describing would involve far more than one volume can establish. Hopkins draws heavily on Edwin Hatch's *The Influence of Greek Ideas on Christianity*¹⁸ for his account of the origins of apostate views. Book X would also have to draw on several books' worth of work by Latter-day Saint scholars, much of which has not yet appeared. To effectively compare Latter-day Saint belief with traditional Christian belief will presuppose a finely honed assessment of the boundaries of each body of beliefs. This involves establishing both the authoritative core and the scope of acceptable variations in belief.¹⁹ It is not enough simply to compare some beliefs Latter-

18. See note 9 above.

19. For example, both Alma (Alma 40:20) and Paul (1 Corinthians 7:25) express in scriptural writings opinions which Latter-day Saints today would consider mistaken. Still, they both were great prophets and teachers, pillars of the church in their time. Clearly, then, there is a range of acceptable variation in belief among members and even leaders of the Church of Jesus Christ. Today some Latter-day Saints believe God was always God, but some don't. To assess the scope of acceptable variation is a challenging task.

day Saints hold with some beliefs traditional Christians hold; book X must address how far the core of traditional Christian belief—or the cores of the major Christian traditions—conflicts with the core of LDS belief. Allegations of harmony or dissonance between Greek philosophy or pre-Nicene Christianity and corresponding Latter-day Saint thinking should take into consideration the context of the Greek or pre-Nicene thinker's work as a whole. In many cases like this, book X should rely on a more focused book or article.

More important, appeals to the Bible to support a Latter-day Saint view must acknowledge how far LDS readings of the Bible rely on assumptions drawn from modern revelation and how far assumptions from other Christian traditions could be reconciled with the biblical text in the absence of modern revelation. Book X should also comment on the viability of tradition itself, beyond the Bible, for shaping religious belief. Roman Catholics, for example, do not believe in relying on sola scriptura; they appeal as well to the authority of a continuous tradition of teaching traced to the original apostles, much as Latter-day Saints appeal to a line of priesthood authority. Book X might be largely self-contained in presenting its philosophical arguments, which tend to be compact in comparison to historical or textual arguments. Still, to be persuasive, its author would have to write from a familiarity with the best philosophical arguments about God and related questions as drawn from the entire history of philosophy, not merely from the work of one contemporary polemicist.

Amid all this, book X would need to avoid either minimizing or exaggerating the differences between Latter-day Saint and traditional views, remaining anchored in a careful reading of the scriptures and the teachings of modern prophets. Hopkins is not the only person prone to define his views in the terms set by a controversy. In the debate between Latter-day Saints and evangelicals, we see the tendency both to minimize differences and to exaggerate them. The latter tendency seems to show itself in the position taken by the evangelical authors of *The New Mormon Challenge*. Among three points of evangelical belief that they take to be nonnegotiable, they include the two points Latter-day Saints are most prone to criticize: belief that the

members of the Godhead constitute one metaphysical substance and belief in creation *ex nihilo*.²⁰ On the other hand, LDS author Stephen Robinson arguably goes too far in minimizing differences in *How Wide the Divide?*²¹

Of course, book X as I describe it would be a monumental work, and I certainly don't fault Richard Hopkins for not producing it. However, having set itself roughly the same task, *How Greek Philosophy Corrupted the Christian Concept of God* greatly suffers by not drawing on the depth of preparation needed to accomplish the task well.

We Latter-day Saints need a book like Hopkins's book aspires to be, a single volume that addresses a general audience and shows how strong the case is for LDS teachings about God, on the basis of the Bible, history, and philosophy. Although these evidences are no replacement for the witness of the Holy Spirit, they are still substantial and are worth studying, even aside from their persuasive force. I hope that Hopkins's work will spur other Latter-day Saints to revisit the project more methodically and carefully.

20. Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge: Responding to the Latest Defenses of a Fast-Growing Movement* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 2002), 399–400. They refer here to the doctrines of creation *ex nihilo* and monotheism, but it is clear from the rest of the book that by monotheism they mean the belief that God is one metaphysical substance.

21. David L. Paulsen and R. Dennis Potter argue as much in their contribution to the *Review* issue on that book: "How Deep the Chasm? A Reply to Owen and Mosser's Review," *FARMS Review of Books* 11/2 (1999): 221–64. Still, in many respects Blomberg and Robinson's book, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), is a fine example of respectful and well-informed dialogue.

“THE PRIVATE CHARACTER OF THE
MAN WHO BORE THAT TESTIMONY”:
OLIVER COWDERY AND HIS CRITICS

Larry E. Morris

During the cold, wet spring of 1829, Oliver Cowdery and Samuel Smith made their way from Palmyra, New York, to Harmony, Pennsylvania, enduring freezing nights, impassable roads, and frostbite to reach the Prophet Joseph. They arrived on 5 April 1829, and Joseph and Oliver met for the first time. As Lucy Mack Smith summarized: “They sat down and conversed together till late. During the evening, Joseph told Oliver his history, as far as was necessary for his present information, in the things which mostly concerned him. And

Review of LaMar Petersen. *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*. Salt Lake City: Freethinker, 1998. xxvi + 257 pp., with appendixes, bibliography, and index. \$15.95.

Review of Robert D. Anderson. *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999. xlv + 263 pp., with index. \$19.95.

Review of Dan Vogel. “The Validity of the Witnesses’ Testimonies.” In *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalf. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002. xvii + 368 pp. \$21.95.

the next morning they commenced the work of translation, in which they were soon deeply engaged.”¹

Over the next few months, Oliver transcribed most of the Book of Mormon and was the first “Mormon” to be baptized. He and Joseph also testified of receiving the priesthood from heavenly messengers, witnessing the appearance of Moroni, seeing the plates, and hearing the voice of God. Oliver is rightly described as the cofounder of Mormonism. So it is not surprising that treatments of early church history pay special attention to Oliver Cowdery’s background and character. In this article I would like to examine how LaMar Petersen (*The Creation of the Book of Mormon*), Robert D. Anderson (*Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith*), and Dan Vogel (“The Validity of the Witnesses’ Testimonies”) handle primary and secondary sources related to Oliver Cowdery. Although they approach Oliver from quite different angles, none of the three takes advantage of the rich wealth of primary documents so relevant in judging Oliver’s character and his reliability as a witness of the Book of Mormon.

Oliver’s Excommunication and Methodist Affiliation

A couple of years ago, I was on a book-buying spree at Benchmark Books when I picked up a copy of Petersen’s book. I garnered a good bit of bibliographic information by checking the footnotes in this book. Petersen implies (without actually saying as much) that Joseph Smith created the Book of Mormon. He also implies—again, without explicitly stating it—that Oliver’s testimony of the Book of Mormon is suspect because of his excommunication, his joining the Methodist

1. Lavina Fielding Anderson, ed., *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001), 439. All quotations are from this 1853 version of Lucy Mack Smith’s history. The detail that one of Oliver’s toes was frozen during the journey is included in Lucy Mack Smith’s rough draft but not in the version published by Orson Pratt in 1853. In his 7 September 1834 letter to W. W. Phelps, printed in *Messenger and Advocate* 1 (October 1834): 13–16, Oliver Cowdery stated that he and Joseph Smith met on the evening of 5 April 1829, took care of “business of a temporal nature” the next day, and commenced translating on 7 April.

Church, his supposed denial of his testimony, and his rejection of the Doctrine of Covenants (pp. 84–86).

Petersen correctly notes that in April 1838, the high council in Far West, Missouri, upheld the following charges against Oliver: “urging on vexatious Lawsuits,” “seeking to destroy the character of President Joseph Smith jr by falsly insinuating that he was guilty of adultery,” “treating the Church with contempt by not attending meetings,” “for the sake of filthy lucre . . . turning to the practice of the Law,” “being connected in the ‘Bogus’ business [counterfeiting],” and “dishonestly Retaining notes after they had been paid and . . . betaking himself to the beggerly elements of the world and neglecting his high and Holy Calling.”²

Petersen’s point is to show that church officials attacked Oliver’s character. This is true enough, but the validity of the charges is another question. Petersen does not mention that Oliver Cowdery did not attend the council and was thus not present to defend himself. Nor does Petersen note that the council rejected the only two charges that Oliver discussed in his letter to Bishop Edward Partridge.³ Finally, letters that Oliver Cowdery wrote during his decade out of the church shed light on his attitude toward his excommunication. In 1843, Oliver wrote to Brigham Young and the Twelve: “I believed at the time, and still believe, that ambitious and wicked men, envying the harmony existing between myself and the first elders of the church, and hoping to get into some other men’s birth right, by falsehoods the most foul and wicked, caused all this difficulty from beginning to end.”⁴

2. Donald Q. Cannon and Lyndon W. Cook, eds., *Far West Record* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 163. The high council excommunicated Oliver Cowdery on 12 April 1838.

3. *Ibid.*, 164–66.

4. Oliver Cowdery to Brigham Young and the Twelve, 25 December 1843, Brigham Young Collection, Family and Church History Department Archives, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (hereafter Church Archives); in Richard Lloyd Anderson and Scott Faulring, eds., *The Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, preliminary draft (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1999), 4:330. When quoting primary documents, I have retained the spelling, underlining, and capitalization of the original (but not crossed-out words).

Two years later, Oliver wrote to Brigham's brother Phineas:

But, from your last [letter], I am fully satisfied, that no unjust imputation will be suffered to remain upon my character. And that I may not be misunderstood, let me here say, that I have only sought, and only asked, that my character might stand exonerated from those charges which imputed to me the crimes of theft, forgery, &c. Those which all my former associates knew to be false. I do not, I have never asked, to be excused, or exempted from an acknowledgement of any actual fault or wrong—for of these there are many; which it always was my pleasure to confess. I have cherished a hope, and that one of my fondest, that I might leave such a character, as those who might believe in my testimony, after I should be called hence, might do so, not only for the sake of the truth, but might not blush for the private character of the man who bore that testimony.⁵

Oliver's sincerity is clearly evident: he was interested in returning to fellowship but not at the expense of his reputation—something he was determined to preserve because he took his role as a witness of the Book of Mormon so seriously. His excommunication and his reaction to it thus make him a more credible witness, not the reverse.

Similarly, Oliver's accusing Joseph of adultery can hardly be taken as evidence that he is not a valid witness. To the contrary, his willingness to make such an accusation while still in the church (Petersen mistakenly says he was not) reveals Oliver's independent spirit. The document in question is a letter from Oliver to his brother Warren written in January 1838, three months before Oliver's excommunication. Speaking of Joseph Smith, Oliver wrote, "A dirty, nasty, filthy affair of his and Fanny Alger's was talked over in which I strictly declared that I had never deviated from the truth in the matter, and as I

5. Oliver Cowdery to Phineas H. Young, 23 March 1846, Church Archives, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:394–95.

supposed was admitted by himself.”⁶ Oliver was apparently unaware that Fanny Alger had become the first plural wife of Joseph Smith. Regardless of the difficulties between Joseph and Oliver, however, this whole incident has no direct bearing on Oliver’s reliability as a witness. It is not clear why Petersen even brings it up.

Next, after claiming that Oliver’s joining another church “is not usually acknowledged by Mormon writers” (p. 85), Petersen curiously quotes one of them, Stanley Gunn, to show that Oliver indeed became a charter member of the Tiffin, Ohio, Methodist Protestant Church. Petersen also fails to mention that Richard Lloyd Anderson, Oliver Cowdery’s chief biographer since Gunn, freely discusses Oliver’s Methodist affiliation in a 1981 Deseret Book publication—*Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (p. 57).

Several primary documents not mentioned by Petersen bear directly on Oliver’s joining with the Methodists. In 1885, eighty-two-year-old Gabriel J. Keen, longtime Tiffin, Ohio, resident and Methodist Church member, signed an affidavit in which he affirmed:

Mr. Cowdrey expressed a desire to associate himself with a Methodist Protestant Church of this city. Rev. John Souder and myself were appointed a committee to wait on Mr. Cowdrey and confer with him respecting his connection with Mormonism, and the “Book of Mormon.” We accordingly waited on Mr. Cowdrey at his residence in Tiffin, and there learned his connection, from him, with that order, and

6. Oliver Cowdery to Warren A. Cowdery, 21 January 1838, retained copy, Oliver Cowdery Letter Book, Huntington Library, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:218–19. As Todd Compton points out, several nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints, as well as unsympathetic ex-Mormons, considered Joseph Smith’s relationship with Fanny Alger to be a marriage. See Compton, *In Sacred Loneliness: The Plural Wives of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1997), 28. See Scott H. Faulring, “The Return of Oliver Cowdery,” in *The Disciple as Witness: Essays on Latter-day Saint History and Doctrine in Honor of Richard Lloyd Anderson*, ed. Stephen D. Ricks, Donald W. Parry, and Andrew H. Hedges (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), 162 n. 43, for a discussion of what Oliver Cowdery may have known about the early practice of plural marriage and whether he participated in it.

his full and final renunciation thereof. We then inquired of him if he had any objections to make a public recantation. He replied that he had objections; that in the first place it could do no good; that he had known several to do so, and they always regretted it; and in the second place it would have a tendency to draw public attention, invite criticism and bring *him* into contempt. But said he, nevertheless, if the church require it, I will submit to it, but I authorize and desire you and the church to publish and make known my recantation. We did not demand it, but submitted his name to the church and he was unanimously admitted a member thereof. At that meeting he arose and addressed the audience present, admitted his error and implored forgiveness, and said he was sorry and ashamed of his connection with Mormonism. He continued his membership while he resided at Tiffin and became superintendent of the Sabbath-school, and led an exemplary life while he resided with us.⁷

Keen, a respected citizen of Tiffin, clearly believed that Oliver Cowdery had fully renounced Mormonism. Still, certain difficulties remain with Keen's statement: he recorded the incident (apparently for the first time) more than forty years after it happened; his account was never corroborated by other witnesses; and he gave the statement at the request of Arthur B. Deming, the anti-Mormon editor of *Naked Truths about Mormonism* and a man likely to lead his witness. Furthermore, two equally respected citizens of Tiffin claimed that Oliver never discussed Mormonism. "I think that it is absolutely certain that Mr. C., after his separation from the Mormons, never conversed on the subject with his most intimate friends, and never by word or act, disclosed anything relating to the conception, development or progress of the 'Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints,'"

7. G. J. Keen, statement to Arthur B. Deming, 14 April 1885, *Naked Truths about Mormonism* 1 (April 1888): 4.

wrote William Henry Gibson, judge, general, orator, businessman, lawyer, and Tiffin's most famous resident.⁸

William Lang, who apprenticed in Oliver Cowdery's law office and later became mayor of Tiffin and a member of the Ohio senate, used similar language: "Now as to whether C. ever openly denounced Mormonism let me say this to you: no man ever knew better than he how to keep one's own counsel. He would never allow any man to drag him into a conversation on the subject."⁹

There are several points to consider here. First, Gibson and Lang were not present during Oliver Cowdery's interview with Keen and Sounder. It is possible that during the interview Oliver made negative statements about Mormonism or Mormons that he never made in Gibson's or Lang's presence. Indeed, Adeline Fuller Bernard, apparently adopted by Oliver and Elizabeth Cowdery and in her twenties when Oliver joined the Methodist Church, later claimed that Oliver made similar statements.¹⁰ However, it is difficult to believe that

8. William Henry Gibson to Thomas Gregg, 3 August 1882, in Charles A. Shook, *The True Origin of the Book of Mormon* (Cincinnati: Standard, 1914), 57.

9. William Lang to Thomas Gregg, 5 November 1881, in Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, 56.

10. Adeline Fuller was born between 1810 and 1820 and apparently lived with the Cowdery family for several years, beginning in Kirtland and moving with them to Far West and Tiffin, Ohio, where she married Lewis Bernard in 1845. (Whether she was related to Oliver's mother, Rebecca Fuller, is not known.) In 1881, when she was in her sixties or seventies, she wrote three letters (4 March, 18 March, and 3 October) to newspaper editor and publisher Thomas Gregg (1808–1892), author of the anti-Mormon book *The Prophet of Palmyra*. In her first letter, Adeline Fuller Bernard claimed, "I have often heard Mr. Cowdry say that Mormonism was the work of Devil" (Adeline M. Bernard to Thomas Gregg, 4 March 1881, typescript, L. Tom Perry Special Collections Library, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University). Bernard may have been recalling harsh statements Oliver made against those he held responsible for his excommunication—"they themselves have gone to perdition," Oliver wrote (Cowdery to Brigham Young and the Twelve, 25 December 1843, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:330). Bernard's letters are problematic for the following reasons: she apparently dictated the letters to others, and the accuracy of the handwritten transcriptions is unknown (indeed, in the second letter, Bernard herself states that her niece made errors in recording the first letter); no originals are extant for the first two letters, so the accuracy as well as the provenance of the typescripts is also uncertain; and Bernard's mental stability—as well as the accuracy of her memory and her basic reliability—is also unknown. (She gets

Oliver could have publicly begged forgiveness for his association with Mormonism (as reported by Keen) without Gibson or Lang hearing about such an incident. Both are emphatic that he *never* discussed the church.

Second, any negative statements Oliver made privately in Tiffin must be viewed in light of his family's harsh treatment in Missouri. Two months after Oliver's excommunication, on 17 June 1838, Sidney Rigdon delivered his famous "Salt Sermon," declaring that the "Salt that had lost its Saviour"—meaning dissenters Oliver Cowdery, David and John Whitmer, W. W. Phelps, Lyman E. Johnson, and others—and was "henceforth good for nothing but to be cast out, and troden under foot of men."¹¹ Two days later, eighty-three church members signed a statement warning the dissenters out of Caldwell County: "There is but one decree for you, which is depart, depart, or a more fatal calamity shall befall you. . . . We will put you from the county of Caldwell: so help us God."¹²

The difficulties that began with the failure of the Kirtland Safety Society—where Oliver and David Whitmer both suffered severe financial losses and became embroiled in financial controversy—had now culminated in a death threat. "These gideonites understood that

certain details right, such as Oliver's living in Tiffin from 1840 to 1847, and gets others wrong, such as the vision of the Three Witnesses occurring at midnight.) This is thus a good topic for further research. Thanks to Richard Lloyd Anderson for sharing his files on Bernard.

11. George W. Robinson, *The Scriptorium Book of Joseph Smith*, 47, Church Archives, in Cannon and Cook, *Far West Record*, 190 n. 1.

12. *Document containing the Correspondence, Orders, &c. in relation to the disturbances with the Mormons; and the Evidence given before the Hon. Austin A. King, Judge of the Fifth Judicial Circuit of the State of Missouri* ([Missouri State Department] Boon's Lick Democrat, 1841), 103–6, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:252, 255. Sidney Rigdon was apparently the author of the "warning out" document, although he did not sign it. A year and a half earlier, in Kirtland (on 7 November 1836), Joseph Smith, Brigham Young, and several other prominent Saints, including Oliver Cowdery, had signed a statement "warning out" the local justice of the peace, although this document specifically noted that "we intend no injury to your person proper[t]y or character in public or in private." Lake County Historical Society, Mentor, Ohio, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 3:478.

they should drive the dissenters as they termed those who believed not in their secret bands,” wrote John Whitmer. “They had threatened us to kill us if we did not make restitutions to them by upholding them in their wicked purposes.”¹³

John Whitmer’s mention of a secret band of Gideonites was right on the mark. As Leland H. Gentry writes, “All evidence indicates that the Danite order originated about the same time Sidney Rigdon gave vent to his feelings in his ‘Salt Sermon.’ The original purpose of the order appears to have been to aid the Saints of Caldwell in their determination to be free from dissenter influence.”¹⁴

Not coincidentally, the Danites were originally known as the “Brothers of Gideon,” and a key participant was Jared Carter (who actually had a brother named Gideon), a member of the high council that had excommunicated Oliver and also one of the signatories of the “warning out” document. Sampson Avard, who soon became head of the Danites, had been the first person to sign the document. “Avard arrived some time since,” Oliver had written in a 2 June letter. “He

13. Book of John Whitmer, 86–87, Reorganized Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints, Archives, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:256–57.

14. Leland H. Gentry, “The Danite Band of 1838,” *BYU Studies* 14/4 (1974): 426–27. According to the *Encyclopedia of Latter-day Saint History*, ed. Arnold K. Garr, Donald Q. Cannon, and Richard O. Cowan (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2000), 275, the Danites were a “defensive paramilitary organization sanctioned neither by the state nor by the Church,” that their leader Sampson Avard “instituted initiation rites and secret oaths of loyalty and encouraged subversive activities,” and that the group “attempted to coerce reluctant Saints into consecrating their surplus money and property to the Church.” David J. Whittaker points out, however, that “some groups of Danites were to build houses, others were to gather food, or care for the sick, while others were to help gather the scattered Saints into the community.” Whittaker, “The Book of Daniel in Early Mormon Thought,” in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh W. Nibley*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1990), 1:170. Since the term *Danite* had different meanings for different people, attempts to compile lists of Danites inevitably arouse controversy. See, for instance, D. Michael Quinn’s list in *The Mormon Hierarchy: Origins of Power* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1994), 479–90.

appears very friendly, but I look upon [him] with so much contempt, that he will probably get but little from me.”¹⁵

According to John Whitmer, he, David, Oliver, and Lyman Johnson rushed to neighboring Clay County to “obtain legal counsel to prepare to over throw these attachments which they had caused to [be] used against us. . . . But to our great asstonishment when we were on our way home from Liberty Clay Co[unty] we met the families of O. Cowdery and L. E. Johnson whom they had driven from their homes and rob[b]ed them of all their goods save clothing, bedding, &c.”¹⁶

Considering these shocking circumstances, why should it be surprising that Oliver Cowdery, a man who remained devoutly religious his entire life, joined with a community of Christians when he moved to Ohio? As Anderson and Faulring note, “after his expulsion from the Mormon Church in 1838, Oliver and his family had no choice but to fellowship with a non-Mormon Christian group.”¹⁷

Moreover, although Oliver Cowdery’s distinction between the “outward government” of the church and its core doctrine, between his enemies and the church leaders he continued to admire, was likely lost on his Tiffin associates, he continued to make such a distinction. In a letter to Phineas Young, Oliver spoke of the “torents [torrents] of abuse and injury that I have received, fomented, no doubt, by those miserable beings, who have long since ceased [to] disgrace the Chu[rch o]f which you are a m[ember].”¹⁸ But three months later, in a letter to Brigham Young and the Twelve, Oliver wrote, “I entertain no unkindly feelings toward you, or either of you.”¹⁹ (Significantly, none

15. Oliver Cowdery to Warren A. and Lyman Cowdery, 2 June 1838, Lyman Cowdery Collection, Church Archives, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:249–50.

16. Book of John Whitmer, 86–87, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:257.

17. Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:312.

18. Oliver Cowdery to Phineas Young, 26 August 1843, Oliver Cowdery Letters, Archive of the First Presidency, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:326.

19. Cowdery to Brigham Young and the Twelve, 25 December 1843, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 4:329.

of the men addressed in this letter—Brigham Young, Heber C. Kimball, Parley P. Pratt, William Smith, Orson Pratt, Willard Richards, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and George A. Smith—had signed the 1838 “warning out” document addressed to Oliver and the other dissenters.) Seen in this context, Oliver’s Methodist affiliation, along with any negative statements he may have made about his experience in Missouri, does no damage to his role as a witness—quite the contrary.

Petersen next quotes what he himself calls a “bit of doggerel” that supposedly proclaimed Cowdery’s denial of the Book of Mormon:

Or prove that Christ was not the Lord
 Because that Peter cursed and swore?
 Or Book of Mormon not his word
 Because denied by Oliver?²⁰

Richard Lloyd Anderson has shown, however, that the author of this poem, Joel H. Johnson, had no firsthand experience with Oliver and that Johnson’s sentiments therefore have no bearing on Oliver’s reliability as a witness.²¹

Finally, Petersen reports (without giving a reference) that David Whitmer claimed that Oliver rejected the Doctrine and Covenants. But why rely on David Whitmer to tell us what Oliver thought when the latter spoke for himself? As Richard Lloyd Anderson points out, Oliver Cowdery edited (and approved of) the Kirtland edition of the Doctrine and Covenants. In his correspondence, he also showed approval for the Twelve (even while he was out of the church) and rejected William McLellin’s attempt to begin a new church movement. Finally, Oliver stated that Joseph Smith had fulfilled his mission faithfully, and, on his deathbed, Oliver expressed support for Brigham Young and the other leaders of the church.²² Such evidence hardly indicates that

20. *Times and Seasons* 2 (1841): 482, cited in Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981), 153.

21. R. L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 153–55.

22. See Richard Lloyd Anderson, “The Second Witness on Priesthood Succession,” part 3, *Improvement Era*, November 1968, 14–20. There is no doubt that David Whitmer had serious objections to the Doctrine and Covenants. He may have mistakenly assumed that Oliver agreed with him.

Oliver rejected the Doctrine and Covenants. Nor does it reflect negatively on Oliver's role as a witness.

Petersen thus opts for secondary accounts and even Joel Johnson's rumor, rather than drawing on primary sources to show us what kind of a person Oliver was. And even when Petersen refers to original documents, he offers no historical context. Given Petersen's extensive bibliography and obvious research, this is disappointing.

Beating a Dead Horse, or Two Dead Horses

A few weeks ago, I was on a book-checking-out fit at the BYU Library when I picked up a copy of Robert D. Anderson's book. (There sure are a lot of Andersons writing about Mormon history lately.) Whereas Petersen concentrates on Oliver Cowdery's later experiences, Anderson does the opposite—dealing mainly with Oliver's early life. But Anderson creates suspicion about his research by getting basic facts wrong. He says that Oliver was born in Middletown, Vermont, and that in "1803 the Cowdery family, including seven-year-old Oliver, moved to Poultney" (p. 97). However, the record is clear that Oliver was born in Wells, Vermont, on 3 October 1806 and that the family subsequently made the following moves: to Middletown in 1809, to New York in 1810, back to Middletown around 1813, and to Poultney in 1817 or 1818.²³ I understand that Anderson's main topic is Joseph Smith, so I don't expect him to do original Cowdery research—such as ferreting out the fine details of the family history, which have not been widely known. But it is another thing to get Oliver's birthplace wrong and to miss his birth date by ten years, especially when the correct information is easily available in the sec-

23. Wells, Vermont Town Record, Record of Births, 158–59; Hiland Paul and Robert Parks, *History of Wells, Vermont, for the First Century after Its Settlement* (1869; reprint, Wells, Vt.: Wells Historical Society, 1979), 81; Carl A. Curtis, "Cowdery Genealogical Material," 1970, 1, L. Tom Perry Special Collections; Mary Bryant Alverson Mehling, *Cowdery-Cowdery-Cowdray Genealogy* (n.p.: Allaben Genealogical, 1911), 186–88; "Historical and Genealogical Material, Poultney, Vermont, Part 1, Historical," 1052, typescript, Poultney town clerk's office, Poultney, Vermont.

ondary sources that Anderson himself cites. For me, red flags start popping up when I see mistakes like this because they reflect a lack of precision. So we are off to a shaky start.²⁴

Next, Anderson claims that Oliver's father, William Cowdery, "had been enmeshed in a scandal involving magic about 1800 near their home and had used divining rods in seeking treasure" (p. 97). Anderson relies on secondary sources for this information even though a nineteenth-century source is readily available—*The History of Middletown, Vermont*, published by Barnes Frisbie in 1867.²⁵ A check of Frisbie's history reveals that the author himself cannot speak authoritatively because he was not an eyewitness of the scandal, which became known as the "Wood Scrape"—in which members of the Wood family united with a treasure seeker named Winchell, employing divining rods and proclaiming frightening prophecies. In addition, Frisbie's star witness, Laban Clark—who was in Middletown at the time—describes the incident in detail without once mentioning William Cowdery. This source thus fails to support either of Anderson's claims about William Cowdery (that he was involved in the scandal and that he used divining rods to search for treasure).²⁶

I believe the larger question is this: since the Wood Scrape occurred four years before Oliver's birth, what is the point of bringing it up in the first place? Some might reply (and D. Michael Quinn seems

24. I don't fault R. D. Anderson for stating—as many previous historians have done—that Oliver once worked as a blacksmith (p. 96). Still, this is a rumor worth dispatching. It apparently originated with Eber D. Howe, the anti-Mormon author of *Mormonism Unveiled*, but Cowdery family documents do not corroborate that idea nor is it consistent with Oliver's studious bent or slight build.

25. Key sections of Barnes Frisbie, *The History of Middletown, Vermont* (Rutland, Vt.: Tuttle, 1867), are reprinted in *Early Mormon Documents*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1996), 1:599–621.

26. Frisbie, *History of Middletown, Vermont*, in *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:599–621. For more information on the Wood Scrape, see Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Mature Joseph Smith and Treasure Searching," *BYU Studies* 24/3 (1984): 489–560; D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, rev. and enl. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1998), 35–36, 121–30; and Larry E. Morris, "Oliver Cowdery's Vermont Years and the Origins of Mormonism," *BYU Studies* 39/1 (2000): 106–29.

to be in this group) that the point is to illustrate that Oliver brought with him an interest in folk magic,²⁷ which is certainly relevant to his involvement with Joseph Smith. But early church history already stipulates that Oliver had such an interest. “Now this is not all,” asserted Joseph in a revelation to Oliver (within weeks of Oliver’s arrival in Harmony), “for you have another gift, which is the gift of working with the rod: behold it has told you things: behold there is no other power save God, that can cause this rod of nature, to work in your hands” (Book of Commandments 7:3).²⁸ It seems likely that critics also raise the Wood Scrape—a scandal in which a visionary man failed to deliver on his promises—to imply guilt by association, to taint Oliver’s reputation, and to raise questions about his reliability, with thinking that goes something like this: “Oliver’s father was duped by a prophet who used magical means to search for treasure and divine hidden secrets. Like father, like son.” Any serious historical investigation rejects such “reasoning.”

Another reason for discussing the Wood Scrape is to imply what Frisbie states explicitly: “It is my honest belief that this Wood movement here in Middletown was one source, if not the main source, from which came this monster—Mormonism.”²⁹ However, although, Frisbie and Quinn both attempt to link Joseph Smith Sr. (and, by implication, Joseph Jr.) with the Wood Scrape, no such link exists.³⁰ The

27. But, of course, even if William Cowdery’s involvement in the Wood Scrape were proved—and it hasn’t been—this would still prove nothing about Oliver. Documents relating to the family’s religious history would be necessary to show a link between the Wood Scrape and Oliver’s use of the rod.

28. Oliver’s use of a divining rod does not count as a strike against him. As Quinn points out in *Magic World View*, 34, such use was common among respected people at the time. “From north to south, from east to west, the divining rod has its advocates,” revealed *The American Journal of Science and Art* in 1826. “Men in various callings, . . . men of the soundest judgment . . . do not disown the art.” It seems that anyone trying to put folk magic in context would mention this, but critics sometimes bring up the Wood Scrape without discussing what Richard L. Bushman has called “the line that divided the yearning for the supernatural from the humanism of rational Christianity.” Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana, Ill.: University of Illinois Press, 1984), 79.

29. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:621.

30. See Morris, “Oliver Cowdery’s Vermont Years,” 116–18.

Wood Scrape is thus of little, if any, value in understanding Oliver Cowdery's reliability as a witness of the Book of Mormon.

Not surprisingly, Anderson next moves to the second point of controversy in Oliver's early history: his alleged association with Ethan Smith, minister of the church Oliver's stepmother once attended (under the previous minister) and author of *View of the Hebrews*.³¹ A number of critics have theorized that Ethan Smith's book "provided the concept and outline for much of the Book of Mormon" (p. 98). According to one subtheory, Oliver knew Ethan Smith or read his book (or both) and used this knowledge to help produce the Book of Mormon. Of course, backing up such a scenario involves proving two things: Oliver's knowledge of Ethan Smith's theories and Oliver's contribution to the Book of Mormon.

On the first point, Anderson acknowledges that "there is no documentation that Ethan Smith and Oliver Cowdery had any kind of relationship" (p. 97). Nevertheless, Oliver certainly could have read *View of the Hebrews* before meeting Joseph. The real crux of the matter is whether there is evidence that Oliver helped create the Book of Mormon, and Anderson fails to discuss recent scholarship on this topic—which I see as a serious flaw and another instance of lack of precision. Royal Skousen's study of the original manuscript of the Book of Mormon offers strong evidence that Oliver acted simply as scribe, not coauthor.³² In addition, witnesses of the translation process, including such friendly individuals as David Whitmer and such hostile individuals as Isaac Hale, agree that Joseph dictated the text. (Nor do any of them mention Joseph and Oliver doing any sort of planning.) Anderson's view of "Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery constructing narratives of Joseph's personal life within Ethan Smith's conceptual framework" (p. 98) thus gets no support from the primary

31. See *ibid.*, 122 n. 3, for a list of books and articles discussing *View of the Hebrews*.

32. See Royal Skousen, "Translating the Book of Mormon: Evidence from the Original Manuscript," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited: The Evidence for Ancient Origins*, ed. Noel B. Reynolds (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), 61–93.

sources. Nor is it difficult to summarize Anderson's use of primary documents in his section on Oliver's background. Anderson simply does not use them.

Hearsay Testimony

Next we move on to Dan Vogel. Several years ago, I was on a book-buying binge at Sam Weller's when I came across a copy of *Early Mormon Documents*, volume 1. When you are reading history, there is no substitute for the original documents. I was impressed with Vogel's textual editing and annotation, and I picked up a copy. I also purchased volumes 2, 3, and 4 when they came out (that is no small investment). Vogel finds a lot of interesting documents in a lot of different places. He also locates vital records, census records, and so on, about most of the people mentioned in the documents. I consider him an expert on primary sources related to early Mormonism and appreciate his considerable research. I took a careful look at what he had to say about the Wood Scrape, for example, and found him to be careful and fair, correctly noting instances where Quinn had overstepped the sources.

But in his article on the witnesses, Vogel does some things that surprised me. First, he quotes nineteenth-century sources like John A. Clark and Thomas Ford in a rather uncritical manner. I don't understand that. I assume Vogel agrees that when it comes to testimony, there is no substitute for getting (to use another equine metaphor) something straight from the horse's mouth. If I want to know what William Clark said about the Lewis and Clark expedition, my best source is William Clark himself. (If I want to know about William Clark's character, on the other hand, my best source is reliable people who knew him well.) Of course, what he said and the accuracy of what he said are two different things. But before I can judge his testimony against other sources and evaluate it, I first need the testimony itself. And witnesses always have the final word on what their testimony is—that is the very nature of testimony.

If such firsthand testimony is not available, we turn to secondhand sources, what in court is called “hearsay evidence” (and is generally not allowed). But it is a dangerous thing to trust expedition member John Ordway for what Clark said about the journey. We now have to ask a whole slew of questions we did not have to ask about Clark—when Ordway recorded Clark’s statements, whether his memory was reliable, whether he was a careful transcriber, whether he was honest, whether he had an ax to grind. We also need to compare Ordway’s account to other secondhand accounts. History, of course, employs different standards than the courtroom, and historians naturally handle a good deal of hearsay testimony. I just believe they ought to always distinguish between first- and secondhand testimony and openly acknowledge the limitations of the latter.

Well, then, what about Clark and Ford? Both gave reports of what Book of Mormon witnesses supposedly said. Clark was an editor and minister who knew Martin Harris. According to Vogel, “Harris told John A. Clark in 1828 that he saw the plates ‘with the eye of faith . . . just as distinctly as I see any thing around me,—though at the time they were covered over with a cloth’” (p. 104). What? This account from a secondhand witness raises some interesting questions about Martin Harris.³³

But let us look at the source. Here is the context of the above quotation, taken from a letter from John A. Clark to *The Episcopal Reader*: “To know how much this testimony [of Three Witnesses] is worth I will state one fact. A gentleman in Palmyra, bred to the law, a professor of religion, and of undoubted veracity told me that on one occasion, he appealed to Harris and asked him directly,—‘Did you see those plates?’”³⁴

This won’t do. Vogel’s claim that “Harris told John A. Clark” is not accurate. This is not secondhand testimony but thirdhand—“he

33. As Vogel himself points out, however, Clark heard this account in 1828, meaning that even if it could be verified it would prove nothing about Martin Harris’s 1829 experience as one of the Three Witnesses.

34. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:270.

said that he said that he said.” If secondhand evidence is problematic, thirdhand evidence is hugely more so. As if that weren’t enough, Clark does not name his source—making it impossible to judge that person’s honesty or reliability. What we have is a thirdhand, anonymous account of what Martin Harris supposedly said. (I think that is called a rumor.) Either through neglect or intent, Vogel has represented an anonymous, thirdhand account as being an identified, secondhand account—and there is a vast difference. And since we have Harris’s firsthand account—it is printed in the Book of Mormon—and several recorded interviews from both friendly and hostile sources (see *Early Mormon Documents*, vol. 2), there is no reason to rely on a thirdhand account.³⁵

This is not to say that anonymous accounts can never be taken seriously. Lewis and Clark scholars, for example, have noted two anonymous accounts that Meriwether Lewis tried to commit suicide as he traveled down the Mississippi River in September 1809. Major Gilbert C. Russell, commander of a fort near present-day Memphis, Tennessee, wrote that members of the keelboat crew told him of the attempts. Similarly, Amos Stoddard, a friend of Lewis’s who was in the area, wrote that he heard of Lewis’s suicide attempts on the boat. Both reports are treated seriously, not simply as rumor, even though neither man identifies his sources. (Most scholars believe Lewis made good on these threats a month later at an inn southwest of present-day Nashville; others believe Lewis was murdered.)

But some interesting differences distinguish Lewis’s case from that of the witnesses: first, Russell was a secondhand witness—that is, he talked to someone who saw Lewis try to kill himself. Clark on the other hand (and I mean John A., not William) is a thirdhand witness because his account involves a quotation—he talked to someone who reported what Martin Harris had said. Second, historians necessarily turn to Russell and Stoddard because no other accounts are available, but first-

35. At the same time, Clark’s report of his direct conversation with Martin Harris is an important historical document that relates particularly to the Anthon transcript.

and secondhand testimony abounds with Martin Harris. In my own research, I am inclined not to use thirdhand accounts at all, unless simply to show what rumors were circulating. There is just too much room for error—such as in the military exercise or parlor game in which a piece of information changes as it goes from person to person.

Vogel doesn't make any bones about Thomas Ford's account being anonymous and thirdhand. The governor of Illinois at the time Joseph and Hyrum Smith were killed, Ford wrote an account of how Joseph basically tricked unnamed witnesses into seeing the plates—after a prolonged session of fasting and prayer (and ridicule from Joseph). As Vogel says, "Ford claimed that his account came from 'men who were once in the confidence of the prophet' but did not identify his sources" (pp. 102–3). (This could actually be fourth-hand testimony—Ford [4] may have talked to men [3] who talked to someone else [2] who talked to the witnesses [1].) Vogel then points out the weaknesses in this document but mysteriously insists that "the essence of the account contains an element of truth" (p. 103).

I am not comfortable with that kind of reasoning. In the first place, historical methodology ought to eliminate Ford's claim as valid evidence—it is anonymous on two levels because neither the sources nor the witnesses are named; in addition, it involves an unknown number of links. It is pure rumor. Secondly, Ford's account contains an element of truth only if one presupposes certain things about the witnesses. But isn't the point to begin without presuppositions and see what the documents tell us, or, in Vogel's words, to "try to determine more accurately the nature of [the witnesses'] experiences" (p. 79)? Again, Vogel expresses a desire to "examine the historical nature of these events" (p. 79). Again, I agree. But why take a main thread of the discussion from a thirdhand, anonymous account when there are identified first- and secondhand accounts available? What sense does it make to conclude (based partly on Ford's "hearsay hearsay") that the Eight Witnesses "may have seen the plates through the box" (p. 104) in a purely "visionary" experience when such a conclusion is flatly contradicted by the witnesses' firsthand testimony: "As many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle

with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon.”³⁶ (The fact that the witnesses’ statement does not include the time and place of their experience, nor the complete details of that experience, does not disqualify it as historical evidence, as Vogel seems to imply. It is a firsthand document, and its language is unequivocal.)

Although strict legal standards do not apply to history, *some* standards do. Thirdhand and anonymous is thirdhand and anonymous, and fair is fair. The Clark and Ford accounts are too far removed from the source to qualify as solid evidence, especially with more direct evidence available. Therefore, I believe they have historical value chiefly as an indicator of what kind of rumors were circulating, not as reliable accounts of witness testimony. (I apply this same standard to thirdhand accounts of Oliver Cowdery, in a packed courtroom, bearing his testimony of Moroni’s visit, and I agree with Vogel that “the claim rests on less than satisfactory grounds.”)³⁷

“Obsessive and Morbid Thoughts”

In regard to the Second Elder, Vogel takes quite a different tack than Petersen or Anderson. “At least during this early period of his life,” Vogel writes, Oliver Cowdery “was known to be unstable and given to obsessive and morbid thoughts. Also, like Harris and Whitmer, he had a history of visions prior to late June 1829. . . . Considering his state of mind and visionary predisposition, his obsessive thoughts may have carried him to the point of delusion; at least, this possibility should be taken into consideration when assessing his role as one of the three witnesses” (pp. 95–96).

Vogel offers examples of these “obsessive and morbid thoughts”: (1) Oliver’s intense preoccupation with the story of the gold plates when he was boarding with the Joseph Smith Sr. family; (2) a letter

36. “The Testimony of the Eight Witnesses.”

37. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:468. One difference between the Cowdery account and the Clark and Ford accounts is this: while Clark’s and Ford’s sources are not identified, one of the Cowdery versions identifies Robert Barrington as its source. It is therefore potentially verifiable in a way that the others are not.

to Joseph Smith in which Oliver expressed his “longing to be freed from sin and to rest in the Kingdom of my Savior”; (3) a second letter to Joseph telling of his “anxiety at some times to be at rest . . . in the Paradise of God”; and (4) a revelation received by Oliver in which he compared the word of God to a “burning fire shut up in my bones,” declaring that he was “weary with forebearing” and “could forebear no longer.”

Let us look at these in context.

1. Lucy Mack Smith relates that Oliver boarded with the Smiths after accepting a position as a school teacher. Joseph Smith had received the plates a year earlier, and Oliver “had been in the school but a short time, when he began to hear from all quarters concerning the plates, and as soon began to importune Mr. Smith upon the subject, but for a considerable length of time did not succeed in eliciting any information.”³⁸ When Joseph Sr. had gained trust in Oliver, he told him about the plates. Not long after that, Oliver told Joseph Sr. and Lucy that he was delighted at what he had heard and believed that he would have the opportunity of writing for Joseph Jr. The next day, Oliver mentioned his intention of going to Harmony to see Joseph Jr., saying, “I have made it a subject of prayer, and I firmly believe that it is the will of the Lord that I should go. If there is a work for me to do in this thing, I am determined to attend to it.”³⁹

Joseph Sr. advised him to seek for his own testimony, “which [Oliver] did, and received the witness spoken of in the Book of *Doc. and Cov.*”⁴⁰ Joseph Jr. later recalled Oliver’s statement that “one night after [Oliver] had retired to bed, he called upon the Lord to know if these things were so, and that the Lord had manifested to him that they

38. L. F. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 432.

39. *Ibid.*, 433.

40. *Ibid.*, 434. As Lavina Fielding Anderson points out, this is probably a reference to Doctrine and Covenants 6:22–24: “Verily, verily, I say unto you, if you desire a further witness, cast your mind upon the night that you cried unto me in your heart, that you might know concerning the truth of these things. Did I not speak peace to your mind concerning the matter? What greater witness can you have than from God? And now, behold, you have received a witness; for if I have told you things which no man knoweth have you not received a witness?”

were true.”⁴¹ In his 1832 autobiographical sketch, Joseph Jr. told more about this manifestation: “[The] Lord appeared unto a young man by the name of Oliver Cowdery and shewed unto him the plates in a vision, also the truth of the work, and what the Lord was about to do through me his unworthy servant.”⁴²

These accounts make it clear that Oliver was a religious individual who had a powerful experience that convinced him of the truth of Joseph Smith’s claims (although Oliver left no detailed description of this epiphany). Given Oliver’s conviction that he was about to participate in the divinely appointed restoration of ancient scripture, it seems perfectly fitting that he was “so completely absorbed in the subject of the Record, that it seemed impossible for him to think or converse about anything else.”⁴³ Who wouldn’t have been? But note the difference between Lucy’s language—“completely absorbed in the subject”—and Vogel’s, “obsessive and morbid.” Although he is using Lucy Mack Smith as his source, Vogel is wresting her text by introducing negative connotations not present in her history. Furthermore, there is every indication that Oliver competently completed his term of teaching before leaving for Harmony. Oliver’s functioning normally in the everyday world is another sign that his preoccupation with the plates was intensely religious but not unhealthy or psychotic.

2–3. During November and December of 1829, while he was in Manchester, New York, Oliver wrote two letters to Joseph, who was in Harmony, Pennsylvania. In these letters, Oliver expresses some of his deep religious reflections. “My dear Brother,” he writes in the first, dated 6 November,

when I think of the goodness of christ I feel no desire to
live or stay here upon the shores of this world of iniquity only
to to ser[v]e my maker and be if posible an instriment in his

41. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 1:74.

42. Scott H. Faulring, *An American Prophet’s Record: The Diaries and Journals of Joseph Smith*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1989), 8.

43. L. F. Anderson, *Lucy’s Book*, 433.

hands of doing some good in his cause with his <grace> to assist me when I consider and try to realize what he has done for me I am astonished and amaised[.] [W]hy should I not be[?] [F]or while I was rushing on in sin and crouding my way down to that awful gulf he yet strove with me and praised be his holy <and> [=] <Eternal> name he has redeemed my soul from endless torment and wo not for any thing that I have me[r]ited or any worthyness there was in me for there was none but it was in and through his own mercy wrought out by his own infinite wisdom by preparing from all Eternity a means where<by> man could be saved on conditions of repentance and faith on that infinite attonement which was to be mad[e] by a great and last sacrif[i]ce which sacr[i]fice was the death of the only begotten of the Father[,] yea the eternal Father of Heaven and of Earth that by his reserection all the Family of man might be brought back into the presance of God if therefore we follow christ in all things whatsoever he comma[n]deth us and are buried with him by baptism into death that like as christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Eternal Father[,] even so we also should walk in newness of life and if we walk in newness of life to the end of this probation at the day of accounts we shall be caught up in clouds to meet the Lord in the air but I need not undertake to write of the goodness of God for his goodness is unspeakable neither tell of the misteries of God for what is man that he can comprehend and search out the wisdom of deity for great is the misteries of Godliness therefore my only motive in this writing is to inform you of my prospects and hopes and my desires and my longing to be freed from sin and to rest in the Kingdom of my Savior and my redeemer when I begin to write of the mercys of god I know not where to stop but time and paper fails.⁴⁴

44. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, 6 November 1829, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 1:78–79.

In the second letter, dated 28 December, Oliver expresses similar feelings:

Be asured my c<h>angeing business has not in any degree I trust taken my mind from meditating upon my mission which I have been called to fulfill nor of slacking my diligence in prayr and fasting but but some times I feel almost as though I could quit time and fly away and be at rest in the Bosom of my Redeemer for the many deep feelings of sorrow and the many long struglings in prayr of sorrow for the sins of my fellow beings and also for those who pretend to be of my faith almost as it were seperateth my spirit from my mortal body do no think by this my Brother that I would give you to understand that I am freed from sin and temptations no not by any means that is what I would that you should understand is my anxiety at some times to be at rest in the Paradice of my God is to be freed from temptation &c.⁴⁵

Each meditation thus laments the sinfulness of this world, proclaims the glory of Christ, and expresses the natural Christian desire for what Paul called “a better country, that is, an heavenly” (Hebrews 11:16). Indeed, Oliver’s passages are reminiscent of Paul’s epistle to Titus, where he writes:

For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour;

45. Oliver Cowdery to Joseph Smith, 28 December 1829, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 1:80–81.

That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life. (Titus 3:3–7)

Oliver's letters reflect deeply religious contemplations, but they are not "obsessive," which my dictionary defines as "excessive often to an unreasonable degree," or "deriving from obsession" (which is defined as "a persistent disturbing preoccupation with an often unreasonable idea or feeling"), and they are not "morbid"—defined as "abnormally susceptible to or characterized by gloomy or unwholesome feelings."⁴⁶ Again, Oliver's ability to function normally in the world of ordinary life is telling. During the time he wrote these letters, Oliver was helping coordinate the printing of the Book of Mormon. Lucy indicates that Oliver took a lead role in this task, working with the printer and ensuring the security of the manuscript. John H. Gilbert, who set the type for the Book of Mormon (and later declared the Mormon Bible to be a "very big humbug"), said that either Oliver or Hyrum delivered pages of the printer's manuscript each morning, that Oliver often read or checked proofs, and that Oliver even set some type at one point. Others who observed Oliver's work with the printer included Pomeroy Tucker, Stephen S. Harding, and Albert Chandler, all hostile to Mormonism. None of these men ever indicated that Oliver acted strangely or irrationally or that he displayed obsessive or morbid tendencies. The historical record instead gives every indication that Oliver acted in a coherent, businesslike manner.⁴⁷

4. The document in question is a revelation recorded by Oliver and known as the Articles of the Church of Christ (later superseded by D&C 20). In this document, Oliver draws on several scriptural sources to define various aspects of church government. As he closes, Oliver writes, "Behold I am Oliver I am an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ Behold I have

46. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, 10th ed. Definitions quoted in this review come from this edition.

47. For Lucy Mack Smith, see L. F. Anderson, *Lucy's Book*, 460–70. For Gilbert, Tucker, Harding, and Chandler, see Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:515–52, 3:62–72, 82–86, and 221–23, respectively.

written the things which he hath commanded me for behold his word was unto me as a burning fire shut up in my bones and I was weary with forbearing and I could forbear no longer Amen.”⁴⁸ This does not strike me as obsessive or morbid but rather as a devout paraphrasing of Jeremiah 20:9: “But his word was in mine heart as a burning fire shut up in my bones, and I was weary with forbearing, and I could not stay.”

While we are on the subject of the Articles of the Church, it is worth noting Vogel’s claim that the Three Witnesses were “suggestible, willing subjects” capable of being deceived or hypnotized (p. 97). Similarly, Robert Anderson calls Oliver “an awestruck, encouraging, and supportive individual who responded fully to [Joseph’s] charisma” (p. 97). But Oliver showed himself to be much more than a willing subject or awestruck follower. Within weeks of his arrival at Harmony, he was trying to translate the plates himself. Not long after that, he received his own revelation on the Articles of the Church. Then, in the summer of 1830, when Joseph made changes to Oliver’s revelation, Oliver commanded Joseph “in the name of God” to delete certain changes.⁴⁹ This does not sound like an individual perfectly willing to be deluded. If anything, Oliver’s strong will interfered with his relationship with Joseph and was a prominent factor in his leaving the church.

Oliver’s Reputation

What of Vogel’s claim that Oliver was “known to be unstable” (p. 95)? Checking Webster’s again, *unstable* means “not steady in action or movement,” “wavering in purpose or intent,” “lacking steadiness,” or, more to the point, “characterized by lack of emotional control.” So the question is, Known to be unstable by whom? I don’t

48. Articles of the Church of Christ, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 1:66.

49. Joseph Smith History, 1839 draft, Dean C. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith, Volume 1: Autobiographical and Historical Writings* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 260.

know of any such reports coming from Vermont, where Oliver lived until he was around twenty. In an 1869 history of Wells, Vermont, for instance, the authors conspicuously decline taking shots at Oliver even though they enjoy poking fun at Mormonism in general: “Oliver the youngest son, was the scribe for Joe Smith, the founder of the book of Mormon. Smith being illiterate was incapacitated to write his wonderful revelations, employed this Oliver Cowdry to perform the duties of a scribe. We well remember this same Oliver Cowdry when in our boyhood, the person who has figured so largely in giving to the world the wonderful revelations that many dupes seek to follow. He attended school in the District where we reside in 1821 and 1822. He then went to Palmyra, N. Y. There with Joe Smith and others in translating mormonism.”⁵⁰ Similarly, Barnes Frisbie, so intent on linking the origins of Mormonism with the Wood Scrape, has nothing negative to report on Oliver.

What of the people who knew him in New York before he left for Harmony? The school board (which included Hyrum) trusted him to take his brother’s place as a teacher; Joseph and Lucy trusted him with details of Joseph Jr.’s obtaining the plates; David Whitmer trusted him to give a candid report on his (Oliver’s) meeting with Joseph Smith. What of the Palmyra neighbors so vocal in their condemnation of Joseph Smith? One, David Stafford, stated that “Oliver Cowdery proved himself to be a worthless person and not to be trusted or believed when he taught school in this neighborhood.” But Stafford’s statement is contradicted by John Stafford, who called Oliver “a man of good character,” and by a host of others: “peaceable,” said Lorenzo Saunders; “as good as the general run of people,” said Hiram Jackway; “His reputation was good,” recalled Benjamin Saunders; “greatly respected by all,” concluded William Hyde.⁵¹

50. Paul and Parks, *History of Wells, Vermont*, 79.

51. For David Stafford, John Stafford, Lorenzo Saunders, Hiram Jackway, Benjamin Saunders, and William Hyde, see Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:57, 123, 134, 115, 139, and 3:197, respectively.

Known to be unstable? It surely doesn't sound like it. What about his later life? Did Oliver reveal signs of instability or obsessive or morbid thoughts? Note these comments from the respected Tiffin residents mentioned earlier: "[Cowdery] led an exemplary life while he resided with us."—G. J. Keen. "Cowdery was an able lawyer, and agreeable, irreproachable gentleman"; "He was an able lawyer, a fine orator, a ready debater and led a blameless life, while residing in this city."—William Henry Gibson. "[Cowdery's] life . . . was as pure and undefiled as that of the best of men. . . . Mr. Cowdery was an able lawyer and a great advocate. His manners were easy and gentlemanly; he was polite, dignified, yet courteous. . . . His addresses to the court and jury were characterized by a high order of oratory, with brilliant and forensic force. He was modest and reserved, never spoke ill of any one, never complained."—William Lang.⁵²

Others concurred. "Mr. C . . . earned himself an enviable distinction at the bar of this place and of this judicial circuit, as a sound and able lawyer, and as a citizen none could have been more esteemed," wrote John Breslin, an editor who served in the Ohio House. Breslin added, "His honesty, integrity, and industry were worthy the imitation of all." Horace A. Tenney, editor of the *Wisconsin Argus*, described Oliver as "a man of sterling integrity, sound and vigorous intellect, and every way worthy, honest and capable." When Oliver died in Missouri in 1850, the local circuit court and bar honored him with a resolution: "In the death of our friend and brother, Oliver Cowdery, his profession has lost an accomplished member, and the community a reliable and worthy citizen."⁵³

All of this from individuals and institutions who had no particular reason to volunteer positive information on Oliver, at a time when anti-Mormonism was raging throughout the Midwest. By contrast,

52. For Keen, Gibson, and Lang, see Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:506; *Seneca Advertiser*, 12 April 1892; Shook, *True Origin of the Book of Mormon*, 57; and William Lang, *History of Seneca County* (Springfield, Ohio: Transcript Printing, 1880), 364–65, respectively.

53. All references in this paragraph are cited in R. L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 44–46, 48.

Vogel offers not a single contemporary account indicating that Oliver Cowdery was unstable or likely to be deluded.

Religious Experience and History

“The important question,” argues Vogel, “is not whether the witnesses were trustworthy or if they continued to maintain their belief in the Book of Mormon throughout their lives. The central question . . . concerns the nature of their experiences and if their statements are distinguishable from those claiming similar religious testimonies” (pp. 79–80).⁵⁴ Again, “To emphasize Harris’s business ethics or Cowdery’s intelligence or Whitmer’s good citizenship is irrelevant to their potential to be inclined to see visions” (p. 97).

It seems that Vogel is acknowledging that Oliver was honest and intelligent—he simply allowed his “visionary predisposition” and his “obsessive thoughts” to carry him “to the point of delusion” (p. 96). In other words, Oliver sincerely thought he saw the plates but he was mistaken, misled, deluded. Oliver was deceived or tricked or hypnotized into believing something that was not true. A “delusion” is a “persistent false psychotic belief regarding the self or persons or objects outside the self”; “psychosis” is a “fundamental mental derangement (as schizophrenia) characterized by defective or lost contact with reality.” By Vogel’s view, this is exactly what happened to Oliver: he had a persistent view (indeed, it lasted the rest of his life) about something

54. It is not clear to me why Vogel’s “central question” concerns a comparison with similar religious testimonies. As a historian, does he claim to have access to those experiences? Does he have any way of knowing whether they were genuine or not? And how would the experience of the Book of Mormon witnesses being “distinguishable” prove anything? However, if one is looking for a key difference between the experience of the Book of Mormon witnesses and the religious epiphanies of others, how about this: the plates. How many other religious individuals claimed to have received an ancient artifact from a divine messenger—an artifact seen and handled by several other people? (Similarly, when Scott Dunn—in his *American Apocrypha* article “Automaticity and the Book of Mormon”—asks for “evidence of clear differences” (p. 36) between the Book of Mormon and other texts produced through “automatic writing,” it seems to me that Moroni’s delivering “the original text” to Joseph Smith is one clear difference.)

that involved a loss of contact with reality (seeing plates and an angel when there were none).

Vogel theorizes that—after a preparatory period of prayer, discussion, anticipation, expectation, and so on—“Smith may have taken three suggestible, willing subjects into the woods and used prayer as a method of induction” (p. 97). In this scenario, the Three Witnesses were deluded by Joseph Smith—they were not co-conspirators with him. So, when Cowdery, Whitmer, and Harris continued to testify of the Book of Mormon throughout their lives, they were in one sense telling the truth: they were reporting the facts as they had perceived them.

If I read Vogel correctly, he is suggesting that Oliver and the others really had some kind of “spiritual” experience—that they really believed that they saw an angel with plates, even though the angel and plates were not actually there. Vogel also expresses a desire to “examine the historical nature of these events” (p. 79). Of course, this is the whole problem, a problem faced by Vogel or any other historian researching the witnesses: history deals with human events that can (at least theoretically) be demonstrated to have occurred or not to have occurred, but visions fall into the realm of the supernatural and are not verifiable in the same manner as ordinary human events.⁵⁵

Take certain experiences of the apostle Paul. When he had a vision of Christ on the road to Damascus, Paul experienced something different from those who accompanied him: “And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man” (Acts 9:7). (To make things even more interesting, Paul later reported that “they that were with me saw indeed the light, and were

55. Of course, even the assumption that historians can demonstrate what did or did not happen in the past is open to debate. What does it mean when two (or more) people perceive the same event differently? Is it even appropriate to speak of “the same event”? Is there such a thing as “objective reality”? Such events as the death of Meriwether Lewis, Thomas Jefferson’s relationship with Sally Hemings, and the assassination of John F. Kennedy have been the source of endless controversy, even though they involved no supernatural element. Nonetheless, while I believe that epistemological distinctions have value up to a point, I also believe that historians can get at the truth of puzzling events through careful, thorough, open-minded research.

afraid; but they heard not the voice of him that spake to me” (Acts 22:9). Again, Paul claimed, “I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knoweth;) such an one caught up to the third heaven” (2 Corinthians 12:2).

Joseph Smith expressed the same kind of impressions, even echoing Paul: “The heavens were opened upon us, and I beheld the celestial kingdom of God, and the glory thereof, whether in the body or out I cannot tell” (D&C 137:1). To take an example particularly relevant to the present discussion, note what Joseph said about his experience of seeing the plates with Martin Harris: “We now joined in prayer, and obtained our desires, for before we had yet finished, the same vision was opened to our view—at least it was, again to me, and I once more beheld and heard the same things.”⁵⁶ I have always taken this as a candid acknowledgment that visions have a different nature than normal human experience. (It also strikes me as the kind of admission not likely to be made by a person masterminding an imagined vision.)

As I see it, these kinds of religious experiences are not empirical, meaning they cannot be verified or disproved through normal observation or testing. (This is clearly evident in the case of Paul: asking observers what they saw or heard does not get to the truth or the heart of Paul’s experience.) I also believe such experiences are not empirical because they involve more than the normal senses—they involve the grace of God and what Paul calls “the eyes of your understanding” (Ephesians 1:18). (I would not claim that visions do not involve the physical senses. I believe they could involve both physical and spiritual means of perception, which seems to be the point David Whitmer was making when he said he saw the plates with both his physical and spiritual eyes.) I would subsequently argue that the visionary experiences of Paul, Muhammad, St. Francis, Joseph Smith, and others are not generally proper subjects of history

56. Jesse, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 1:237, emphasis added.

because history is limited to empirical observation, and visions transcend empirical observation.⁵⁷

Does that leave the historian totally adrift in regard to visions? I do not believe so. While history cannot verify or disprove a vision's veracity, it can tell us a good deal about the lives of the people involved and the times they lived in. Historians must simply do their best with the tools they have. In the case of Oliver Cowdery, history cannot tell us whether he really saw the angel and the plates or not. However, history can help us understand whether Oliver was unstable, given to obsessive thoughts, and likely to be deluded, as Vogel claims.

We investigate such issues through normal historical channels—by checking the accounts of reliable people on the scene. Take another example from the Lewis and Clark era, one particularly applicable because it involves stability—in this case, the stability of Meriwether Lewis in the weeks before he died. Those who argue that Lewis committed suicide claim that he acted in an unstable manner during this period. And how do they make the case for instability? By quoting William Clark, who was worried about Lewis's mental state when the two parted in St. Louis late in August 1809; by referring to a contemporary newspaper that said Lewis was "indisposed" when he reached New Madrid, Missouri, several days later; by mentioning Gilbert Russell's firsthand report of Lewis's drinking and secondhand report of Lewis's suicide attempts; by offering a letter from John Neely (Lewis's companion on the trail called the Natchez Trace) that said Lewis acted unwell during the trip; by quoting Mrs. Griner, caretaker of the inn where Lewis spent his last night, when she said that Lewis acted irrationally and talked to himself in a strange manner.

By contrast, what does Vogel offer in the way of evidence that Oliver Cowdery was unstable? He offers no accounts at all from reliable

57. Saying that a vision is different from normal experience is not the same as saying it is, in Vogel's words, "internal and subjective" (p. 86). In the case of the Three Witnesses, Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer reported having the same visionary experience that involved physical objects. This experience involved the supernatural to be sure (and by my definition it is not empirical), but it was clearly not internal and subjective.

witnesses.⁵⁸ Instead, he simply shows that Oliver was a religious person—as seen by his intense preoccupation with the Book of Mormon and by his devout longing to proclaim the gospel and to be free of the sins of this world. That is the extent of Vogel’s evidence, the sum total of his claims concerning Oliver’s instability, his obsessive and morbid thoughts, and his tendency to be deluded. This is circular reasoning pure and simple. Oliver’s “state of mind and visionary predisposition” (p. 96) are taken as evidence that he was deluded when he saw the plates and the angel.⁵⁹ But this is only true if one first assumes that Oliver’s earlier spiritual experience was bogus, and on what basis can Vogel possibly make that assumption? As a historian, Vogel has no access to Oliver Cowdery’s private religious experiences. Therefore, the best Vogel or any other historian can do is investigate whether Oliver had a previous history (based on the accounts of reliable witnesses) of being “unstable.” No such evidence concerning Oliver has come to light. Vogel’s claim that Oliver was “known to be unstable” thus collapses because Vogel cannot demonstrate that a single person ever made such an accusation. Vogel’s sole evidence that Oliver was unstable is Vogel’s own interpretation of Oliver’s religious experience, and this does not count as historical evidence.⁶⁰ (Personally, I would find it quite refreshing if Vogel would tell us

58. While Vogel does quote Lucy Mack Smith in regard to Oliver Cowdery, Lucy hardly supports Vogel’s conclusions. Quite the contrary, Lucy clearly believed that Oliver was stable, reliable, and capable of being trusted.

59. The phrase “visionary predisposition” itself reveals Vogel’s bias. If Oliver had a genuine spiritual experience or vision while he was contemplating what Joseph Sr. and Lucy had told him about the plates, it would hardly be fair to characterize his subsequent attitude as a “predisposition.”

60. On one level, historians do have a basis for judging “religious experience.” If, for example, one found reliable evidence that Joseph Smith and the Three Witnesses agreed to concoct a story about Moroni appearing and showing them plates, this would certainly give one good historical reason to reject the testimony printed in the Book of Mormon. Again, if a third party claimed to have tricked Joseph and the others (by pretending to be an angel and producing fake plates, for example), this would also count as potential historical evidence. (Stephen Harding claims to have tricked Calvin Stoddard in a similar manner; see Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 3:82–86.) Of course, such scenarios involve deceit or insincerity, taking them out of the realm of genuine religious experience.

what he thinks about these issues. Does he acknowledge the existence [or at least the possibility] of angels but insist that Oliver did not see one, or does he reject the notion altogether?)

Hallucinations and Tin Plates

As Vogel points out, Richard Anderson and other “apologists” have frequently cited primary documents concerning Oliver Cowdery’s honesty or intelligence. Rather than arguing this point, Vogel claims that Oliver’s trustworthiness is not “the important question” (p. 79), that his intelligence is “irrelevant” to his “potential to be inclined to see visions” (p. 97). (In doing so, Vogel seems to agree that Oliver was honest and intelligent.)

Whoa, Nellie. Vogel gives the appearance of making a historical claim (that Oliver was inclined to see visions or was capable of being deluded), but he immediately disqualifies the type of historical evidence normally used to substantiate or refute such a claim—that is, accounts from reliable people who knew the person in question. Therefore, when a third party like John Breslin or Horace Tenney (neither of whom had apparent ulterior motives) says that Oliver’s honesty and integrity were worthy of the imitation of all, or that Oliver was a man of sound and vigorous intellect, this—according to Vogel—does not really relate to Oliver’s inclination to see visions or be taken in by an “induced” vision. But try as he might, Vogel cannot disassociate Oliver’s honesty and intelligence from his claim of visionary experience, or what Vogel thinks is a delusion. Instability, obsessive and morbid thoughts, and a susceptibility to delusion are flaws (either related to character or intelligence), and how would a historian ever identify such flaws if not through the accounts of reliable people who knew the individual well?

That is not all. Vogel concentrates on Oliver’s experience as one of the Three Witnesses, basically claiming that Joseph primed Oliver, David, and Martin into a highly excitable state and “induced” a vision. We are to understand this as hypnosis or hallucination that somehow did not manifest itself in normal life. (In Vogel’s words, “hallucinators

are otherwise indistinguishable from other people and can function normally in society” [p. 97]. If a claim ever cried out for an extensive footnote, this one does, but Vogel does not oblige.) But Vogel would have done well to point out that Oliver Cowdery claimed to have received quite a variety of visions over a considerable period of time. In 1836, for example, seven years after Joseph and Oliver reported the vision of John the Baptist, “The vail was taken from their [Joseph and Oliver’s] minds and the eyes of their understanding were opened. They saw the Lord standing upon the breast work of the pulpit before them, and under his feet was a paved work of pure gold. . . . After this vision closed, the Heavens were again opened unto them and Moses appeared before them. . . . After this Elias appeared. . . . After this vision had closed, another great and glorious vision burst upon them, for Elijah, the Prophet . . . also stood before them.”⁶¹ This seems to be a vision in the biblical tradition, similar to the Transfiguration, one that Vogel might call “purely visionary.”

Moroni’s visit was different because it involved the voice of God, an angel, and physical objects. The Three Witnesses said, “We also know that they [the plates] have been translated by the gift and power of God, for his voice hath declared it unto us. . . . an angel of God came down from heaven, and he brought and laid before our eyes, that we beheld and saw the plates, and the engravings thereon” (The Testimony of the Three Witnesses). The plates themselves take this out of the realm of the purely visionary, but David Whitmer reported seeing, “but a few feet from us, . . . a table upon which were many golden plates, also the sword of Laban and the directors. I saw them as plain as I see you now, and distinctly heard the voice of the Lord declaiming that the records of the plates of the Book of Mormon were translated by the gift and the power of God.”⁶² (Looking at David Whitmer’s account, I wouldn’t call this vision internal, subjective, or

61. Vision, 3 April 1836, Joseph Smith Diary, in Anderson and Faulring, *Documentary History of Oliver Cowdery*, 3:366–67. Interestingly, this early version of Doctrine and Covenants 110 was recorded by Warren Cowdery, Oliver’s oldest brother.

62. Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1993), 63.

purely visionary. A table is hardly required for objects that are imagined or seen in the “mind’s eye.”)

The visits of John the Baptist and of Peter, James, and John fall into yet another category, one where Joseph and Oliver claimed physical contact with resurrected beings. Concerning the visit of John the Baptist, Joseph wrote, “While we were thus employed praying and calling upon the Lord, a Messenger from heaven, descended in a cloud of light, and *having laid his hands upon us*, he ordained us.”⁶³

What did Oliver say about these experiences? Rather than referring to them in some mystical, hazy way, he habitually used concrete, definite language to describe them, leaving little doubt as to his absolute conviction that these experiences were genuine:

On a sudden, as from the midst of eternity, the voice of the Redeemer spake peace to us, while the vail was parted and the angel of God came down clothed with glory, and delivered the anxiously looked for message, and the keys of the gospel of repentance!—What joy! what wonder! what amazement! While the world were racked and distracted—while millions were grouping as the blind for the wall, and while all men were resting upon uncertainty, as a general mass, our eyes beheld—our ears heard. As in the “blaze of day;” yes, more—above the glitter of the May Sun beam, which then shed its brilliancy over the face of nature! Then his voice, though mild, pierced to the center, and his words, “I am thy fellow servant,” dispelled every fear. We listened—we gazed—we admired! ’Twas the voice of the angel from glory—’twas a message from the Most High! and as we heard we rejoiced, while his love enkindled upon our souls, and we were rapt in the vision of the Almighty! Where was room for doubt? No where: uncertainty had fled, doubt had sunk, no more to rise, while fiction and deception had fled forever!⁶⁴

63. Jessee, *The Papers of Joseph Smith*, 290, emphasis added.

64. Oliver Cowdery to W. W. Phelps, 7 September 1834, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:420.

I have been sensitive on this subject, I admit; but I ought to be so—you would be, under the circumstances, had you stood in the presence of John, <with> our departed brother Joseph, to receive the Lesser Priesthood—and in the presence <of> Peter, to receive the Greater.⁶⁵

I was present with Joseph when an holy angle [angel] from god came down from heaven and conferred or restored the Aronic priesthood, And said at the same time that it should remain upon the earth while the earth stands. I was also present with Joseph when the Melchisideck priesthood was conferred by the holy angles [angels] of god.⁶⁶

The Lord opened the heavens and sent forth his word for the salvation of Israel. In fulfillment of the sacred Scripture the everlasting Gospel was proclaimed by the mighty angel, (Moroni) who, clothed with the authority of his mission, gave glory to God in the highest. This Gospel is the “stone taken from the mountain without hands.” John the Baptist, holding the keys of the Aronic Priesthood; Peter, James and John, holding the keys of the Melchisdek Priesthood, have also administered for those who shall be heirs of salvation, and with these ministrations ordained men to the same Priesthoods. . . . Accept assurances, dear Brother, of the unfeigned prayer of him, who, in connection with Joseph the Seer, was blessed with the above ministrations.⁶⁷

65. Oliver Cowdery to P. H. Young, 23 March 1846, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:492.

66. Reuben Miller Journal, 21 October 1848, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:494. William Frampton was also present when Oliver bore his testimony at Council Bluffs, Iowa, in October 1848. In a letter written more than fifty years later, Frampton quoted Oliver thus: “I received the Priesthood in connection with Joseph Smith from the hands of the Angel, I conversed with the Angel as one man converses with another. He laid his hand on my head, and later with Joseph received the Melchisedeck Priesthood.” Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:496.

67. Oliver Cowdery, statement to Samuel W. Richards, 13 January 1849, in Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:499.

In suggesting that Oliver Cowdery's "obsessive thoughts may have carried him to the point of delusion" (p. 96), Vogel has seriously understated the case. If Oliver were deluded, this was not a one-time anomaly, momentary lapse of reason, or single instance of overactive imagination—this was delusion on a grand scale: a prolonged, sustained fantasy by one who maintained belief in the false reality even years after being removed from the environment. If deluded, Oliver Cowdery was seriously out of touch with reality—hearing voices, seeing one angel after another, examining objects, and even feeling hands on his head—all this in the absence of external stimuli. Given the scope of these visions, I believe something has to give—either Oliver's honesty or his intelligence. Either he is lying about all these angels or else his intellect is hardly "sound and vigorous." And yet Oliver's business associates go out of their way to praise both Oliver's integrity and his mind.

Vogel thickens the plot by suggesting that "it would have been possible for [Joseph] to make plates out of tin" (p. 108). Of course, Joseph's manufacturing plates and passing them off as an ancient artifact falls fully in the realm of possibility. If Joseph did produce such plates, he did it at a specific time and place, with specific material obtained from a specific person or location. All of this would be potentially verifiable through normal historical means—through the journals, letters, or reminiscences of honest people on the scene (or possibly through such documents as receipts or promissory notes for the sale of tin or tools). Certainly it is conceivable that Joseph could have constructed fake plates (although Vogel offers no support for this notion) and kept it a secret. But I'm not sure *how* conceivable this is—the Palmyra neighbors were obviously keeping a close eye on Joseph (just check *Early Mormon Documents*, vols. 2 and 3); why didn't they notice anything? Where and when did Joseph make his plates? Did anyone else know about these plates?

As hard as it would have been for Joseph to keep his manufacture of tin plates a secret while he was alive, is it possible that he could keep the secret after death—that no evidence would come forth after more than one hundred and fifty years (in a society where historical

inquiry is actively promoted)? Let us look at another parallel from the same time period in American history. General James Wilkinson received appointments from George Washington and Thomas Jefferson and even became governor of Louisiana. Although some accused him of treason, Wilkinson was never charged with illegal activity. Long after his death, however, a search of Mexican archives revealed that Wilkinson had indeed spied for the Spanish, an offense he would have been executed for. This example points out the difficulty of keeping a plot hidden after one's death, for Wilkinson was a master deceiver.

Getting back to Oliver, Vogel apparently believes that Oliver was sincere—that he really believed he saw visions. But what about the tin plates? As Richard Anderson remarks, “Oliver Cowdery played an extraordinary role in the beginning of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. . . . no one else stood in the unique position of being able to expose Joseph Smith at all critical points, if he could be exposed.”⁶⁸ This is doubly true for tin plates, a physical object that has to be transported from place to place. Vogel is apparently suggesting that Oliver, an intelligent, thinking man who must have had countless opportunities to recognize the truth, was taken in by this fraud, that he never caught on that the plates were fake. But such a theory is not compatible with what Oliver himself said about the plates: “I beheld with my eyes, and handled with my hands, the gold plates from which [the Book of Mormon] was transcribed.”⁶⁹ This is clear language, but look what Vogel does with Oliver's text: “Oliver Cowdery also probably intended to refer to separate occasions when he told a group in Council Bluffs, Iowa, according to Reuben Miller, ‘I beheld with my eyes. And handled with my hands the gold plates’ Cowdery probably handled the plates, covered by a cloth, sometime during his residence in Pennsylvania and then simply amalgamated the two experiences” (p. 89).

68. R. L. Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses*, 37.

69. Vogel, *Early Mormon Documents*, 2:495.

Vogel is jumping to conclusions not justified at all by the text itself. How does Vogel know that Oliver intended to refer to separate occasions? How does Vogel know that Oliver is talking about touching the plates through a cloth? (Vogel mentions this possibility more than once; Oliver never mentions it.) Oliver doesn't make either of those claims. If anything, Oliver's mention of seeing and handling the plates in the same breath would indicate a single experience, not two. (Could Oliver have seen and handled the plates when he was attempting to translate?) This is another example of where Oliver's honesty and intelligence come very much into play. By Oliver's own account, he saw and handled the plates and thus had the perfect chance to see if they looked genuine. If one assumes the plates were fake, one must ask whether Oliver was lying (sacrificing his honesty) or whether he was actually tricked into believing that crude (how could they have been otherwise?) tin plates were really intricate ancient artifacts (sacrificing his intelligence—how gullible can a person be?). Either of these is a character flaw, but what evidence does Vogel offer that reliable people on the scene, Mormon, ex-Mormon, or anti-Mormon, perceived such flaws in the character of the Second Elder? He offers none.⁷⁰

70. Vogel seems to believe that even though Joseph constructed fake plates, no one actually saw those plates—they only felt them through a cloth or hefted them in a box. (This would account for the fact that no one pointed out the obvious: “Hey, these aren't gold plates with intricate engravings—these are tin plates produced in the local blacksmith shop.”) Vogel further suggests that whenever a witness “saw” the plates, he was not seeing the tin plates but rather the imaginary plates, which had “the appearance of ancient work, and of curious workmanship.” To make this logic work, Vogel makes the astonishing assertion that “Smith may have produced a box containing the plates or perhaps something of similar weight. The witnesses were permitted to lift the box, but their view of the plates was visionary. In other words, they may have seen the plates through the box. Thus, each man could claim that he had both seen and handled the artifact” (p. 104). But does Vogel reach this conclusion based on any statement from the Eight Witnesses themselves? Absolutely not. Instead, he relies on speculation and thirdhand accounts from the likes of Stephen Burnett, Warren Parrish, and Thomas Ford. Vogel thus reaches a conclusion that flies in the face of clear, direct testimony offered by the witnesses themselves: “And as many of the leaves as the said Smith has translated we did handle with our hands; and we also saw the engravings thereon” (The Testimony of the Eight Witnesses). “I thank God that I felt a determination to die rather than deny the things which my eyes had

As I see it, neither Petersen, Anderson, nor Vogel seriously mines the rich source material available on Oliver Cowdery (particularly ironic for Vogel, since his other works show a sound knowledge of those sources). When evaluating eyewitness testimony, historians ask three main questions: (1) Was the witness known to be reliable? (2) Did he record his testimony reasonably soon after the event itself? and (3) Is his account corroborated by other reliable witnesses? For Oliver Cowdery, a man shown by the historical record to be honest, intelligent, and of sound character, the answers to all three questions are yes. If he does not qualify as a good witness, who would?

seen, which my hands had handled" (Hyrum Smith, p. 51). "I have most assuredly seen the plates from whence the Book of Mormon is translated, and . . . I have handled these plates" (John Whitmer, p. 54). See Richard Lloyd Anderson, "Personal Writings of the Book of Mormon Witnesses," in *Book of Mormon Authorship Revisited*, 39–60.

ISAIAH INTERWOVEN

Kevin L. Barney

I have had a longstanding interest in biblical languages and literature,¹ and for that reason I have followed the work of Latter-day Saint Hebraists, such as Donald W. Parry. In his book *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources*, Parry weaves together an English translation of the book of Isaiah drawn from four sources: (1) the Masoretic Text (MT), which is the traditional text of the Hebrew Bible and in general the text underlying the King James Version (KJV) of the Old Testament, (2) the Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a) discovered in Cave 1 at Qumran among the Dead Sea Scrolls,² (3) the Book of Mormon, and (4) the Joseph Smith Translation (JST) of the Bible.

1. This interest was first sparked when, as a young missionary in Denver around 1977, I saw C. Wilfred Griggs, during a Know Your Religion fireside, read passages from the New Testament directly from the Greek (which I recognized later as the maroon edition published by the United Bible Societies), translating on the fly. I thought then (and still think) that that was just about the niftiest trick I had ever seen.

2. For Latter-day Saint readers interested in learning more about the Dead Sea Scrolls, I recommend reading Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Questions and Responses for Latter-day Saints* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000), and Donald W. Parry and Dana M. Pike, eds., *LDS Perspectives on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1997), which contains a bibliography of further LDS-oriented studies of the scrolls.

Review of Donald W. Parry. *Harmonizing Isaiah: Combining Ancient Sources*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001. ii + 286 pp., with two appendices, notes, and bibliography. \$9.95.

Parry begins by explaining what the Great Isaiah Scroll is and why it is significant to a translator. He then demonstrates the difficulty of reading the KJV because of its archaic language. There follows a basic primer on parallel forms in Isaiah, including chiasmus. The bulk of the book is the new translation. Two appendixes are included: Appendix 1 contains a long list of archaic words and expressions in the KJV of Isaiah, and appendix 2 sets forth a list of chiasmic structures in that book. Sixteen pages of notes follow, with a four-page bibliography concluding the volume.

The formatting of the poetry is well done, the Hebrew translation is strong, and Parry shows excellent scholarly judgment in making text critical decisions about whether to follow MT or 1QIsa^a. The cavalier dismissal of other ancient evidence in determining the original text was, however, problematic. Further, Parry simply includes the Book of Mormon and JST variants directly into the text. This methodology was apparently based on the assumption that all (or virtually all) such variants represent an English rendition of the original text of Isaiah. The assumption that the Book of Mormon and JST versions of Isaiah passages represent a pure textual restoration is common among members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. In my view, however, this assumption has no place in what purports to be a careful text critical exercise.

Formatting

As a missionary, I purchased a copy of an Oxford annotated Revised Standard Version (RSV) of the Bible. Like nearly all modern translations, the RSV represents Hebrew poetry by showing its parallel structures. The visual clues of the poetic lines were like a revelation to me. I had earlier attempted to read poetry as if it were prose. I deduced the basics of parallel structures on my own from this experience and learned about them in greater depth when I later attended Brigham Young University.³

3. See Kevin L. Barney, "Understanding Old Testament Poetry," *Ensign*, June 1990, 51–54.

Parry has taken a leading role in instructing the Saints about poetic parallelism in the Bible and has extended that instruction to the parallelistic forms in the Book of Mormon.⁴ The primer on parallelism in this volume is brief, but reading it will yield increased comprehension of the biblical text. Consider first the KJV block-text presentation of Isaiah 21:11–12:

11 The burden of Dumah. He
 calleth to me out of Seir, Watch-
 man, what of the night? Watch-
 man, what of the night?
 12 The watchman said, The morn-
 ing cometh, and also the night: if ye
 will enquire, enquire ye: return,
 come.

I suspect most English readers would scratch their heads after reading those two verses. Now compare the KJV with Parry's presentation:

A Prophecy of Judgment against Dumah (21:11–12)

The burden of Dumah:

One calls to me out of Seir,

Watchman, what remains of the night?

Watchman, what remains of the night? (21:11)

The watchman said,

The morning is coming,
 but also the night,

if you will inquire,
 then inquire,

4. See, for instance, Donald W. Parry, *The Book of Mormon Text Reformatted according to Parallelistic Patterns* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992).

return,
come. (21:12)

Note that Parry's translation is not appreciably different from the KJV. Nevertheless, those who read the KJV are likely to try to read these words as connected prose. Parry supplies the reader with useful bold-face headings,⁵ giving some context for the lines that follow. From the line division, the passage is obviously poetic. Not only does Parry convey the text in parallel lines, but he also separates the couplets and other related lines by an additional space. I had never seen such a format before. I liked this manner of presentation; I found it effective to virtually *compel* the readers to see the parallelism of the text.⁶

Parry's solution for presenting the chiasmic passages of Isaiah is distinctive. I have often contemplated whether it would be better to present the text in regular parallelism or, in the case of chiasmic passages, to

5. The headings are taken from Donald W. Parry, Jay A. Parry, and Tina M. Peterson, *Understanding Isaiah* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1998).

6. However, in a few passages this extra space was not inserted, and it was not immediately clear to me why. For example, Isaiah 12:1–3 is presented in a single-spaced format. This may be because it represents a single speech; but if that were the reason, one would think that the following verse, which also represents a single speech, would be single-spaced, yet the expected space divider does appear between the couplets of that verse. Isaiah 38:11–14 was another example of unexplained single-spaced formatting. In the prose sections (such as Isaiah 36–37:21), Parry continued to divide the verses by a space, which I found confusing; this made the prose look too much like poetry to me. I would have preferred to have the prose simply single-spaced. I had occasional quibbles with the line division (for instance, I would add a new line after “neck” in Isaiah 10:27), but these were relatively minor.

I should also mention that I was impressed that Parry presented Isaiah 10:12 as poetry. Most translations understand this verse as prose, but I think it is clearly poetry because of the parallel collocation of the word pair eyes//heart, which Parry renders:

I will punish the fruit of the king of Assyria's boastful *heart*,
and the glory of his haughty *eyes*.

See Wilfred G. E. Watson, “The Unnoticed Word Pair <<eye(s)>>||<<heart>>,” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 101 (1989): 398–408, and “The Word Pair <<eye(s)>>||<<heart>> Once More,” *Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente antico* 9 (1992): 27–31.

show their chiasmatic structure. The formatting of the Isaiah passages in *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted* varies from passage to passage, but I cannot say that I have had a better idea for how to structure the presentation. What Parry has done here is present the poetry in Isaiah in its most fundamental parallelistic structure and then separately identify chiasmatic passages in appendix 2. This is a wonderful solution. The main text is elegantly done (a vast improvement over *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted*),⁷ but the information regarding chiasmatic passages is readily available for interested students.⁸

In 2001 Dan Vogel gave a lecture on chiasmus and the Book of Mormon.⁹ In the course of that presentation, Vogel mentioned two issues to which I believe Parry's appendix 2 has relevance. First, Vogel argued that reversals of exact, or near exact, words do not constitute "real" chiasmus. To distinguish these structures, he used the word *antimetabole* (Greek for "a turning about in the opposite direction").

7. Another improvement over *Book of Mormon Text Reformatted* in this volume is the use of headers to identify the passages appearing on each page. It is much easier to find particular verses in this volume. Parry gives the verse numbers at the *end* of each verse, rather than at the beginning, as is customary. I imagine that he did this so as not to interfere with the presentation of the parallel lines. This format takes just a little getting used to, but before long I did not even notice the difference.

8. Parry uses an interesting and efficient method for detailing the chiasmatic structures. He separates elements by slash marks and balanced halves by double slash marks, as in Isaiah 43:18: "do not remember/former things/ /things of old/nor consider." He uses this method for longer chiasmatic structures as well. Oddly, in a couple of places he switches to the more familiar letter and indentation system, as in Isaiah 55:8–9:

A For my thoughts are not your thoughts,
 B neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD,
 C For as the heavens are higher
 C than the earth,
 B so are my ways higher than your ways,
 A and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Dan Vogel, in a Sunstone Symposium presentation on chiasmus, Salt Lake City, August 2001, audiotape no. 374, argued that the letter and indentation system is designed to make chiasmus look more impressive than it really is. I disagree; I simply think it is an effective mechanism for detailing the structure in a visually clear way. But I had no objection to Parry's alternative presentation; it certainly conveys the essential information to readers.

9. Vogel, Sunstone Symposium presentation.

He argued that of the forty-nine nonbiblical, simple (by which I take it he meant reversals of two elements only) chiasms in the Book of Mormon, only three¹⁰ are based on differing words and therefore can be said to be “real” chiasmus; the others are some form of antimetabole, or same-word reversals. On what basis Vogel rejects antimetabole as “real” chiasmus is completely unclear to me. Vogel himself acknowledged that Wilfred G. E. Watson accepts such structures as chiasmus (in his terminology called “mirror” or “literal” chiasmus), and I for one am a fan of Watson’s work on Hebrew poetry. Just because Vogel has found simple same-word reversals in modern advertising slogans does not mean that same-word reversals cannot constitute “real” chiasmus reflecting a genuine ancient Hebrew poetic device.¹¹ A quick survey of Parry’s appendix 2 reveals seventeen examples of such same-word reversals in Isaiah.¹² It really does not matter to me whether we call these chiasmus or antimetabole; I am comfortable that they do represent a legitimate Hebrew poetic device.¹³ If they do not, then someone forgot to tell Isaiah, easily the greatest of the Hebrew poets.

10. The three Vogel would allow are 1 Nephi 17:38; 2 Nephi 3:1; and Alma 9:12. A quick look through the catalog appended to my “Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs in the Book of Mormon,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 15–81, suggests an additional seven simple chiasms not dependent on same-word reversal: 1 Nephi 17:30; 2 Nephi 25:4; Mosiah 11:29 and 12:1; Alma 60:22; 3 Nephi 9:19; and Ether 6:9. I suspect that there are others as well; Book of Mormon scholars have tended to focus on the longer, more complicated examples of chiasmus rather than the simple ones.

11. Vogel has also discovered references to antimetabole in early rhetorical handbooks such as those of Samuel Knox (Baltimore, 1809) and John Newton (London, 1821), where the form is called *epanados* (Greek for something like “a return along the way,” used to indicate repetition of a sentence in inverse order). I am a great admirer of Vogel’s ability to ferret out such information from early sources, but I am very skeptical that Joseph Smith was influenced, directly or indirectly, by such high literary handbooks. See John W. Welch’s article, “How Much Was Known about Chiasmus in 1829 When the Book of Mormon Was Translated?” in this number of the *FARMS Review*, 47–80.

12. Isaiah 5:20 (three occurrences); 6:10; 7:22; 11:13; 22:22; 27:5; 34:4; 35:1–2; 44:21; 45:1; 48:21; 50:4; 56:5; 57:15; and 59:16–17.

13. Before I ever knew someone would try to make an issue out of same-word repetition, I commented on the phenomenon and gave references to scholarly discussion of the subject. See Barney, “Poetic Diction and Parallel Word Pairs,” 24 n. 25.

Vogel not only rejects chiasmus in the Book of Mormon, he also rejects the intentionality of chiasmus in the Bible. That is, he would acknowledge that the form *appears* to be present in some passages, but he would argue that the ancient author did not intend it; it is simply an artifact of random reversals in a paralleling literature. I could not disagree more strongly with Vogel's conclusion, but I doubt that a way to "prove" authorial intentionality or unintentionality exists.¹⁴ Ultimately, perceptions of intentionality are a subjective matter. Nevertheless, I would encourage interested readers to peruse Parry's appendix 2 and come to their own conclusions about whether the form was really intended by Isaiah. I feel confident that it was and that the occasional reversal of parallel elements was not random at all but was a fully intended variation meant, among other things, to relieve the tedium of the repetitive style. As for longer chiasms, I suppose ten thousand monkeys randomly typing could eventually come up with something like the elegant, tightly woven chiasm at Isaiah 60:1–3, but it would take a very, very long time indeed.

While I am pursuing this brief aside on chiasmus, I will say that I did agree with some of what Vogel had to say. His presentation was essentially a call for greater rigor in dealing with the phenomenon of chiasmus, and I am all for that. Many people seem to believe that God speaks in chiasms and that not only the whole of scripture—but just about everything else, from the Declaration of Independence to the phone book—was written in chiasmus. Chiasmus seems to have captured the popular imagination in an undisciplined way. On the Internet in particular, a certain "chiasmus a-go-go" character is evident in some people's attempts to make use of this rhetorical form. Responsible scholars need to lead the way and show care, caution,

14. See the excellent analysis of John W. Welch, in "Criteria for Identifying and Evaluating the Presence of Chiasmus," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 4/2 (1995): 1–14. Vogel criticized this article for not being as rigorous as that of other Bible scholars he prefers. It appears to me that Welch covers all the same basic concepts, with a few controversial exceptions (such as nonparalleling central elements; but it is not clear to me that central elements necessarily need to have a parallel member). He also criticized Welch for not showing examples, but I think the basic concepts articulated by Welch are abundantly clear as stated.

and rigor in talking about chiasticity. If an element is out of balance in some way, we should not try to hide that. We should affirmatively note the problem for readers and deal with it forthrightly in concert with the other criteria of chiasmus. Such weaknesses by themselves do not mean that a passage is not chiastic, but they need to be appropriately weighed in the context of the posited structure as a whole.

Translation

In his introduction, Parry spends a few pages demonstrating that the KJV is difficult to understand. Anyone who has struggled through the Isaiah passages of the Book of Mormon will, I suspect, concur. There seems, however, to be some built-in resistance in the Latter-day Saint marketplace to alternate English translations. This is unfortunate in my view. I remember that one student in my Gospel Doctrine class would always bring his RSV and, when called upon, would read from it. While I was pleased by this (as it often generated wonderful teaching moments), I well remember the discomfort in the room when students were faced with a translation other than the KJV. People did not seem to know what to make of the varying language. I have seen the same phenomenon on other occasions since. I suspect that some of that discomfort is a concern for whatever theological bias might be present in the alternate translation. But, of course, all translations, even the KJV, suffer from theological bias. I have always felt that the concern could be controlled by using the KJV primarily and the alternate translation more as a reference. If concern still existed, more than one alternate translation could be used; perhaps two or three from different traditions, thus giving students a certain control over rogue interpretations.¹⁵

As I have indicated, I like Parry's translation. Predictably, it bears the same characteristics as his writing style generally: it is strong,

15. Elder Mark E. Petersen used to practice this kind of control in his writings, often quoting as many as a dozen translations to establish that he was not wresting some passage of scripture. For most purposes, however, I should think two or three translations would be sufficient.

efficient, straightforward, and without a lot of attempts at extraneous flourishes. I have no problem recommending Parry's translation from the Hebrew, and I hope that it is successful and well received. One might think that a translation from a faithful Latter-day Saint scholar would be able to leap over that hurdle to acceptance among the Saints. I am not aware of any church member ever actually trying to market a complete translation of the Bible, so it remains to be seen whether a translator's church membership would make a difference in people's attitudes toward such a work.

In the case of Isaiah, however, there is a precedent: Avraham Gileadi, a Latter-day Saint scholar, published a translation of Isaiah that seemed to enjoy some modest success and acceptance.¹⁶ This may have been because of the difficulty of the Isaiah KJV text and the importance of understanding Isaiah for understanding the Book of Mormon. An obvious question I should address is whether Parry's translation is an improvement over Gileadi's. I have not studied Gileadi's version carefully, but I think I have seen enough to form some views concerning it and its relationship to Parry's translation. I would like to separate this issue into two parts: before addressing which translation I view to be the stronger, I would first like to address the issue of whether Gileadi's translation is fundamentally competent, and then I will move to a comparison with Parry's translation.¹⁷

Parry takes a very dim view of Gileadi's work in his review.¹⁸ He concludes that the integrity and quality of Gileadi's translation do not surpass those of the KJV and are not an advance over such modern translations as the Jerusalem Bible or the New International Version (NIV). As to other modern translations, I have not looked into the

16. Avraham Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988).

17. See the comments of Bruce D. Porter and Donald W. Parry in their reviews of *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon*, by Avraham Gileadi, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 40–51 and 51–62. My comments here are focused on the value of the translation itself and are responsive to Parry's review of the translation, which appears from 58–62.

18. Parry, review of *The Book of Isaiah*, 51–62.

matter sufficiently to have an opinion, but I strongly disagree with Parry's conclusion that Gileadi's translation is not an advance over the KJV. This is actually a low standard for a modern translation to have to exceed. The KJV was a revision of prior English translations, and so it was already somewhat archaic when it first appeared in the early seventeenth century. Although it has been edited since that time, it remains archaic and in places difficult to understand, as Parry himself demonstrates. Naturally, the many advances in our understanding of Hebrew (and its linguistic background) since the time of the production of the KJV and in additional witnesses to the text (such as the Great Isaiah Scroll) were not available to the KJV translators and consequently are not reflected therein. The KJV reflects numerous renderings that are now considered to be incorrect.¹⁹ As to ease of comprehension and correctness, I am confident that Gileadi's work is an improvement over the KJV. Although I certainly would not extend this claim to literary quality, Parry's translation would not best the KJV on that score either.

In order to support his negative critique of Gileadi's translation, Parry presents a chart²⁰ detailing some thirty-four translation errors in Gileadi's rendering of Isaiah 54. In my view, this chart is fundamentally unfair and fails to justify Parry's strong negative reaction. I would break down these thirty-four "errors" into six categories:

19. A substantial literature on the Internet addresses this point in the context of the KJV-only debate. Since I discuss this article below, here I mention only as a convenient source for some examples, David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon . . . and Joseph Smith in Isaiah" (completed January 1996 and initially published on the Web August 1998), part three. This article is available at Wright's Web site, at members.aol.com/jazzdd/IsaBM1.html. A portion of this material was reworked and expanded into a separate article: David P. Wright, "Does 'and upon all the ships of the sea' (2 Ne. 12:16 // Isa. 2:16) Reflect an Ancient Isaiah Variant?" in *Mormon Scripture Studies* available at mormonscripturestudies.com/bomor/dpw/2ne1216.asp. An edited version of this material has been published as David P. Wright, "Isaiah in the Book of Mormon: Or Joseph Smith in Isaiah," in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 157–234; see the comments of Daniel C. Peterson in his editor's introduction to *FARMS Review of Books* 13/1 (2000): ix–xv.

20. Parry, review of *The Book of Isaiah*, 59–60, with additional explanatory comments on 61–62.

1. *Omissions for the sake of English style.* Parry writes that Gileadi omits twelve instances of the ׀ *waw* conjunction (normally rendered “and” but with other possible translations depending on context), five instances of the ׀ *ki* conjunction (normally rendered “because/for/since/that”), two instances of the interjection הן *hen* and one of הנה *hinneh* (normally rendered “behold” in the KJV), and one of גור *gor* (an infinitive absolute, which provides emphasis to the finite verb that immediately succeeds it). These are twenty-one occurrences, or over half of his total of thirty-four. In my view these are not “errors” but simply intentional omissions for the sake of English style. A translation has not only a source language (in this case Hebrew) but also a target language (in this case English). While a professor might normally encourage beginning students to represent each and every word of the source in their translation, so as to assure that they understand how those words are being used, a seasoned translator has to be given latitude to keep an eye on the needs of the target language.²¹ For instance, the abundance of the word *and* in the Book of Mormon has often been claimed as a Hebraism (and I personally accept it as such). But a Hebraism by definition is a relic of overliteral translation (otherwise, we would not be able to perceive it); it would therefore seem to follow that good English style might require fewer *ands* than would good Hebrew. I checked a couple of other strong translations to which I happen to have ready access, and both the NIV, which Parry mentions in his critique, and the New English Translation (NET)²² also omit most of these occurrences of *and*. It is not unusual for modern renderings to omit the interjection *behold*, as the NIV does here. As for the infinitive absolute, the NET mentions its presence in its extensive translation notes but makes no attempt to represent it in its English translation. The NIV similarly omits it,

21. Parry certainly understands this, as he reports in his acknowledgments that Don E. Norton, a professor of English at BYU, performed a review of the English used in his translation.

22. A product of the Biblical Studies Foundation, available at www.bible.org/netbible/index.htm.

as does another translation I checked, the translation accompanying the Soncino Books of the Bible.²³ To me, the proof is in the pudding, as Parry translates the beginning of Isaiah 54:15: “Behold, whoever will *surely* [gor] stir up strife.” While quite accurate, I found the insertion of “surely” here somewhat gratuitous and awkward as a matter of English. I have greater sympathy for Parry’s complaint about the omission of *ki* conjunctions, but I noticed that the NIV also omitted the one at Isaiah 54:4.²⁴ While I personally would have represented these *ki* conjunctions, at least I can see why Gileadi omitted them.

2. *Instances where Parry adopts the same “mistake” as Gileadi.* Parry must have forgotten about these comments when he did his own translation, because in four cases he makes the same “mistake” as charged to Gileadi. I do not view these as mistakes, and I would say that neither Gileadi nor Parry is being unreasonable in his approach to these translations:

A. Parry gives the preferred reading of הָלַח [לֹא] [*loʿ*] *chalah* in Isaiah 54:1 as “you did not become weak.” Gileadi renders “you were not in labor,” which Parry rejects as interpretive. But in his own translation, Parry renders

Sing, O barren one, you who did not bear;
break forth into singing, and cry aloud, *you who did not
labor with child* [*chalah*]

Are Parry and Gileadi wrong here? Certainly not. The problem lies in the Hebrew lexicon Parry used, which does not cover the use of this word in this passage and is therefore deficient on that score.²⁵

23. I. W. Slotki, *Isaiah: Hebrew Text and English Translation with an Introduction and Commentary* (London: Soncino, 1949; rev. 1983). According to a publisher’s note on the flyleaf, the English translation derives from the Jewish Publication Society of America.

24. Parry himself omits the *ki* at Isaiah 15:1. He was right to do so; Blenkinsopp calls this word here a *vox vacua* (meaning “empty voice,” or a word physically present in the sentence that is not necessary and does not perform a function). See Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2000), 296.

25. Francis Brown, Stephen R. Driver, and Charles A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, trans. Edward Robinson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1977). In

B. In Isaiah 54:4, Parry says that תַּחֲפִירִי *tachpiri*²⁶ should be rendered “display shame,” and that Gileadi’s “be disgraced” translates an active verb as a passive verb. But Parry’s own translation reads in part, “and be not confounded, for you will not *be put to shame* [*tachpiri*].” Parry renders this verb with a passive construction in English, as does the NET and Soncino Bible. Nothing is wrong with this shift in voice.

C. Gileadi’s translation of Isaiah 54:6 begins, “The Lord calls you *back*.” Parry notes that the word *back* is not present in the Hebrew and that its addition is therefore misleading. But, once again, Parry has done the same (“For the LORD has called you *back*”), as do the NIV and the NET. Adding the English word *back* here is not misleading; it actually helps to convey the correct sense to English readers.

D. In Isaiah 54:8, Parry says that רַחַמְתִּי *richamti* is a perfect verbal form used in a habitual sense: “I have compassion.” Gileadi’s English future “I will have mercy” mistakenly treats the verb as an imperfect. But in his own translation, Parry renders “but with everlasting kindness *I will have compassion* [*richamti*] on you.” The NIV, NET, and Soncino Bible all do the same.

3. *Instances where Parry follows a similar “mistake” to Gileadi’s in another passage.*

A. In Isaiah 54:15, Parry says that יַגֹּר *yagur* should be rendered “he shall gather”; Gileadi renders “those who gather [into mobs],” thus improperly making a singular into a plural. But the sense here is not just singular, it is collective, and it is not uncommon to represent collectives in English with the plural. Here, Parry himself renders “*whoever* will surely stir up strife,” showing the collective sense of the subject of the verb. Parry does the same thing as Gileadi at Isaiah 11:16: “as there was for Israel in the day that *they* came from the land of Egypt.” The Hebrew has a singular, *he*, referring back to Israel. Parry has reflected

my reprint edition, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1979), the discussion of *chalah* appears at 317–18, where the principal meaning is given as “be weak, sick.”

26. Parry transliterates this word as *tachppiri*, with a doubled *pp*, but the *dagesh* in that letter is *lene*, not *forte*, so the consonant should not be doubled.

the collective sense of the word in English with the plural *they*. Nothing is wrong with this.

B. In Isaiah 54:16, Parry says that כְּלִי *kli*, “weapon/instrument/vessel,” is singular and that Gileadi improperly translates the word as a plural, “weapons.” Parry himself renders the word here as a singular: “an instrument.” But in Parry’s translation of Isaiah 14:25, we read:

then his yoke will be removed from them,
and his burden will be removed from their *shoulders*.

The Hebrew here is literally singular, “their shoulder.” But Parry’s rendering is not wrong. Hebrew nouns can have an inherently collective quality that is often best expressed in English with a plural. “Their shoulder” would not be considered good English grammar.²⁷

4. *Instances where Parry misunderstands Gileadi.*

A. In Isaiah 54:7, Parry says that קָטֹן *qaton* should be rendered “small,” that Gileadi has rendered it “indeed,” and that this is inaccurate. Indeed it would be, if that were what was going on here. Parry renders “For a small moment [בְּרֵגַע קָטֹן] *berega^c qaton*], I forsook you” while Gileadi renders “I forsook you indeed *momentarily*.” “Momentarily” is Gileadi’s rendering that equates to Parry’s more literal “for a small moment.” Gileadi’s “indeed” is a translator’s gloss looking ahead to the following *waw* conjunction, translated correctly here by Gileadi (as by Parry) with “but”: “but with loving compassion I will gather you up.” The “indeed” is setting up the contrast that will be expressed by “but”; it is not a translation of *qaton*. *Berega^c qaton* could be translated literally as “for a small time” or “for a brief moment,” much as Parry has done, or a little less literally, “momentarily,” as Gileadi has

27. I am reminded of an old commercial for a brand of gasoline. A retired English grammar teacher pulls up to the pump, and one of her former pupils begins to pump the gas for her (I told you it was an *old* commercial). The attendant tells her how much he likes his job and how much he enjoys being able to put such gasoline in everyone’s cars and fill their *tank*. Ever the teacher, the woman corrects the young man: “Tanks! Tanks!” at which the attendant blushes and says, “Ah, you’re welcome!”

done. One approach may be preferred over the other, but that does not make the other wrong.

B. In Isaiah 54:14, Parry says that לֹא תִירָא [loʿ] *tiraʿi* should be rendered “you will not fear.” Gileadi renders “have no cause to fear.” Parry explains that the verbal form is imperfect, not imperative. True enough; but Gileadi did not render it as an imperative. Although it looks that way in the little snippet Parry quotes, the full context of Gileadi’s rendering reveals otherwise:

You shall be firmly established through righteousness,
you will be far from oppression
and have no cause to fear.

The structure of Gileadi’s rendering is “you will X and have no cause to fear.” Thus, for this purpose, it would have been more accurate to give Gileadi’s rendering as “you will . . . have no cause to fear.” It is certainly not rendered by him as an imperative.

5. *Instances where other translations support Gileadi.* In the following three cases, a number of other translations support Gileadi’s rendering:

A. In Isaiah 54:2, Parry states that יַטּוּ *yattu* is technically a third-person jussive, meaning “let them extend.” In his translation he renders

Enlarge the place of your tent,
and *let* the curtains of your dwellings *be stretched out*.²⁸

Gileadi represents this with a second person imperative, “extend.” But representing the jussive with an imperative is a common treatment here. The NIV reads “stretch your tent curtains wide,” and the NET reads “stretch your tent curtains way out!”

B. Parry renders Isaiah 54:5 as:

28. Parry’s translation appears to follow an emendation from the active (hiphil) MT *yattu* to the passive (hophal) form יֻטּוּ *yuttu*, which is suggested by a retroversion from ἐκταθήτωσαν *ektathētōsan* [a passive form of ἐκτείνω *ekteinō* “stretch out” found in several of the Greek versions]. I have no problem with this, but as a variation from MT it should have been mentioned in a textual note.

and your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel—
 the God of the whole earth will he be called [יִקְרָא
yiqqare’].

Gileadi renders “who is called,” representing the imperfect with an English present. But note that the NIV and NET do the same.

C. In Isaiah 54:17, Parry renders in part: “and every tongue that will [revile] against you in judgment you will *condemn* [תִּרְשָׁעִי *tarshi‘i*] as guilty.” Gileadi renders “every tongue that rises to accuse you, you shall *refute*.” Parry says Gileadi is inaccurate here; while that may be, note that the NIV and NET handle this the same way Gileadi does.

6. *Instances where Gileadi is being interpretive.*

A. In Isaiah 54:9, Parry says that the perfect verbal form נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי *nishba‘ti*²⁹ should be rendered “I have sworn,” whereas Gileadi renders it with an English present: “I swear.” In his translation, Parry renders “for *I swore* [*nishba‘ti*] that the waters of Noah should no more go over the earth.” The other translations I checked all agree with Parry, although they vary between using an English perfect and an English past tense (as Parry himself did). Biblical Hebrew verbs do not have tense in the same sense as English, but rather aspect. Whether a verb is best rendered as a past, present, or future tense in English depends on context and various grammatical clues. The Hebrew perfect cannot be mechanically equated with the English past, the Hebrew participle with the English present, or the Hebrew imperfect with the English future. Parry acknowledges that “some flexibility exists in translating Hebrew verbs,”³⁰ yet he seems unwilling to grant Gileadi the full range of that flexibility. Gileadi’s present tense rendering here may be wrong, but a demonstration that it is in error would require more than just parsing the Hebrew verb as a perfect.

29. Parry transliterates this word as *nishbba‘ti*, with a doubled *bb*, but the *dagesh* in that letter is *lene*, not *forte*, so the consonant should not be doubled.

30. Parry, review of *The Book of Isaiah*, 62.

B. In Isaiah 54:11, Parry begins his translation “O, *afflicted one* [עֲנִיָּה *‘aniyyah*]” where Gileadi begins “Poor wretch.” Parry says that this rendering is inaccurate. I prefer Parry’s rendering, but according to my Webster’s one who is “wretched” is “deeply afflicted.” I do not see Gileadi’s choice as wildly inaccurate so much as mildly interpretive. While I would agree that Gileadi’s choice here is perhaps the less elegant, it is not clear to me that it is affirmatively erroneous.

The text of Isaiah is difficult. Reasonable, competent translators can and do disagree about how to handle various passages and various problems. I certainly disagree with some of what Gileadi did in Isaiah 54, but I do not view those disagreements as major. I also disagree with the conclusion Parry draws from his review of that chapter. In my view the charge that Gileadi’s translation is fundamentally or grossly incompetent is groundless. If there are problems with Gileadi’s translation, and there certainly are (as with any translation), they are more on the margins than in the basics. I for one have no problem with Latter-day Saint students using Gileadi’s translation as a reference in their study of Isaiah.

This brings us to the next question: between Gileadi’s and Parry’s translations, which is the stronger? In my view Parry’s is, to some extent at least, the stronger of the two. Readers should understand a couple of limitations to this opinion, however. First, it is based on a fairly superficial spot check of various passages that I found interesting; it is not based on an exhaustive comparison of the entire text. These spot checks tend to come from the first half of the book, because I am only human and frankly I tired of the exercise after a time. Second, these are professional scholars with Ph.D. degrees in their chosen fields, while I am but a dilettante, a fool rushing in where angels fear to tread. For these reasons, caveat lector.

In most of the passages I checked, Parry and Gileadi agree. Of those where they disagree, in a few I would follow Gileadi, but in more I would follow Parry. Below are illustrations from each category:

1. *Passages where Parry and Gileadi agree.*

A. Isaiah 1:4. Where Parry has “they have turned their backs,” Gileadi has “they have lapsed into apostasy.” This is a good illustration of the differences between the two translations; Parry’s is the more literal, Gileadi’s the more free. Yet in their own way both are correct here.

B. Isaiah 1:29. Parry and Gileadi both emend the third person of MT to a second person, as reflected in Parry’s “For [you] will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired.”³¹

C. Isaiah 3:3. Parry and Gileadi both have “skilled craftsman,” where other translations render something like “skilled magician/charmer.”

D. Isaiah 5:5. Parry renders “I will remove its hedge, and it will burn.” Gileadi agrees with the concept of burning here, even though many others would have the hedge being “eaten up” (as pasture).

E. Isaiah 8:11. Parry renders “For the LORD spoke to me [*when he took me by the hand*].” Gileadi agrees with “clasping my hand,” even though Blenkinsopp, in the Anchor Bible, argues against this way of reading the passage.³²

F. Isaiah 10:3. Parry and Gileadi both understand קָבוֹד *kabod* in this passage, which most literally means “glory,” to mean “wealth.”

G. Isaiah 10:17. Parry renders

And the Light of Israel will become a fire,
and *their* Holy One a flame;

Gileadi also renders “their Holy One,” even though literally MT is singular, “his/its Holy One.”

H. Isaiah 15:9. MT has the name Dimon twice in this verse; both Parry and Gileadi follow 1QIsa^a and read Dibon instead.³³

31. The second person is suggested by a handful of Hebrew manuscripts and the Targum.

32. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 241.

33. For a discussion of this reading, Parry sends readers to Millar Burrows, *The Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Viking, 1955), 307–8. Burrows gives as evidence for the reading Dibon as opposed to Dimon the following: (1) no city named Dimon is otherwise known, while Dibon is well known; (2) both 1QIsa^a and the Vulgate read Dibon; and (3) the Syriac reads Ribon, apparently mistaking the Hebrew letter *daleth* for *resh* (the two letters resemble each other), but supporting the *b* instead of *m*. He goes on, however, following

I. Isaiah 20:1. Where the KJV takes Tartan as a proper name, both Parry (“commander-in-chief”) and Gileadi (“general”) correctly understand it as a title and translate it.³⁴

2. *Passages where I would follow Gileadi over Parry.*

A. Isaiah 3:17. Parry renders

therefore the LORD will bring sores on the head of the
daughters of Zion,
and the LORD will lay bare their *foreheads*.

Gileadi has “private parts” in lieu of “foreheads.” I think this is a very close question. I can see what Parry is doing; for Hebrew פֹּת *pot* he is relying on an argument regarding Akkadian *putu*, and the references to the heads of the daughters in the prior line might support “foreheads” as a matter of parallelism. But סִפְּחַח *sippach* in the previous line (rendered here as “bring sores on”) is a *hapax legomenon* (a word that appears only once in a work); based on “lay bare” in the second line it may mean something like “uncover,” as Blenkinsopp takes it in the Anchor Bible.³⁵ Also, *pot* is not quite *hapax*; it also occurs at 1 Kings 7:50 as an

Harry Orlinsky, to opine that the prophet probably did intentionally write Dimon with an *m*, meaning the city Dibon but creating an intentional word play with the word *blood* (דָּם *dam*) used in the verse (“For the waters of *Dimon* are full of *blood* [*dam*]/For I will bring yet more upon *Dimon*”). Burrows saw 1QIsa^a and the Vulgate as independent, common-sense corrections to Isaiah’s Dimon. While I support the Dibon rendering of both Parry and Gileadi, I found the cite to Burrows without actually explaining his view (i.e., that the prophet really did intentionally write Dimon) to be somewhat problematic.

34. Parry’s note at this passage is confusing. It begins “1QIsa^a (תִּרְתָּן). MT (תִּרְתָּן) reads ‘Tartan.’” This wording seems to suggest that he is following 1QIsa^a in contradistinction to MT. But the only difference between the two texts is the spelling, with 1QIsa^a (correctly) reflecting a *waw* used as a *mater lectionis* (Latin for “mother of the reading,” a technical term of Hebrew grammar that refers to a consonant standing for a vowel). Since *tartan/turtanu* is not a proper name but a title for an Assyrian general (derived from Akkadian *turtanu*), 1QIsa^a does not reflect a different word than MT here (apart from its variant orthography). That is, it was the KJV that mistakenly took this word as a proper name, not MT. For a discussion of this reading, Parry cites Dewey M. Beegle, “Proper Names in the New Isaiah Scroll,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 123 (October 1951): 123, 128 (the correct page numbers are 26–30 at 28), but Beegle confirms that the variation between MT and 1QIsa^a is simply one of orthography and does not involve different words.

35. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 201.

architectural term for a socket to a door pivot, and Isaiah is not above using coarse language to describe the treatment of captives. Based primarily on context, I would give the edge to Gileadi here, which seems to be the most common approach by other scholars as well.

B. Isaiah 10:24. Parry renders

Therefore thus says the Lord, the LORD of Hosts,
O my people who dwell in Zion, be not afraid of the
Assyrian;

he will smite you with a rod,
and will lift up his staff against you, after the manner of
Egypt.

This is indeed a literal rendering of the Hebrew. For the third line above, Gileadi renders “*though* they strike you with the rod.” Here is an example where a less literal translation can sometimes convey the meaning of the original more clearly than a very literal one. The word *though* is not present in the Hebrew text, but without it the English of this verse is confusing (i.e., first you say do not be afraid of the Assyrian, but then you say he is going to smite me, which suggests that I should be afraid of him). A number of other translations do something similar to Gileadi here.³⁶

C. Isaiah 28:9b. I would agree with Gileadi, and with many other translations, that this half of the verse would be better represented as rhetorical questions rather than simple statements, as Parry takes it. Parry’s treatment of Isaiah 28:9–13 seems to retain a heavy KJV influence.

D. Isaiah 40:3. Parry renders

A voice of one calling in the wilderness,

prepare the way of the LORD,
make straight in the desert a highway for our God.

36. As with a painting, however, if one steps back and views the passage in its broader context, the parallel with the Egyptian bondage should make the meaning clear enough, even if one translates literally as Parry has done here.

The words “in the wilderness,” however, belong in the next line, where Gileadi correctly puts them, as those words parallel “in the desert” from the final line of the verse. Parry’s treatment once again seems to reflect a lingering KJV influence.³⁷

3. *Passages where I would follow Parry over Gileadi.*

A. Isaiah 1:3. Parry renders

Israel does not know,
my people do not understand.

Gileadi has “are insensible”; I did not care for this translation as a matter of English.

B. Isaiah 1:26. Parry renders “the Faithful City,” with a definite article as in the Hebrew, where Gileadi uses the indefinite article, “a faithful city.”³⁸

C. Isaiah 2:6. This is a difficult passage. I would agree with Parry that the most likely interpretation is one relating either to alliances or commerce: “And they clasp hands with foreigners,” emending MT וּבְיַדֵּי *ubeyalde* “with the children of” to וּבְיָדַי *ubeyade* “with the hands of.” Gileadi gives “and are content with the infantile heathen,” which I think is wrong in any event.³⁹

D. Isaiah 3:3. I think Parry is correct that the end of the verse should read something like “and the expert enchanter,” as opposed to Gileadi’s “orators.”

E. Isaiah 3:8. Where Parry literally renders “provoking his glorious eyes,” Gileadi has “an affront to his glory before his very eyes.” The concept of “an affront to his glory” is fine, but the wording “before his very eyes” strikes me as a misunderstanding of the Hebrew.

37. A couple of other places where I noted a continuing KJV influence were with the retention of Jerome’s “Lucifer” at Isaiah 14:12 and some of the language of Isaiah 53.

38. Note, however, that at Isaiah 10:21 Parry renders “*The* remnant will return” where the Hebrew lacks the definite article. Whether to reflect an article or the absence of an article from one language to another can be very tricky business, as other languages often use the article in ways different from English.

39. I agree with Parry’s translation. Inasmuch as it appears to be based on an emendation of MT, however, Parry should have provided a textual note here explaining what he was doing.

F. Isaiah 7:20. Parry renders

In that day the LORD will shave with a razor that is
hired beyond the river—

the king of Assyria—

the head, and the hair of the feet,
and it will also clip off the beard.

Gileadi in lieu of “the feet” has “your legs.” The Hebrew רַגְלֵי *regel* can refer to the lower part of the leg (below the knee), including the foot. Since feet do not have much hair to speak of, but legs do, if the word is meant to be understood literally, Gileadi’s translation would be preferable. In my view, however, the word is not meant to be taken literally. The word *feet* is often used as a euphemism in the Old Testament for genitalia.⁴⁰ I believe the intended meaning here is that Assyria would shave not only the hair of the head and the beard, but also the pubic hair. Therefore, I would render either “feet” as Parry has done, so that the euphemistic usage is apparent, or “pubic hair,” interpreting the euphemistic usage for readers.

G. Isaiah 8:1. Where Parry has “with an ordinary stylus,” Gileadi has “in common script.” The Hebrew is בְּחֶרֶט אִנּוֹשׁ *becheret ’enosh*, literally “with a stylus of a man.” Although the precise meaning of the qualifying “of a man” is somewhat obscure, a חֶרֶט *cheret* is an engraving instrument. While it is not unusual for translators to interpret the expression further as referring to a writing in ordinary letters (i.e., one that is intelligible to all), I prefer the more literal rendering here.

The above represents a sampling of what I found. In sum, while I think Gileadi’s translation is fundamentally competent, I thought Parry’s was at least marginally the stronger of the two.⁴¹

40. See Martin Noth, *Exodus* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1962), 50, who, writing of the “bridegroom of blood” scene where Moses’ son is circumcised, writes, “‘Feet’ is of course here a euphemistic expression, as elsewhere in the Old Testament.”

41. As with all books, this volume has its share of errors. In particular, the sigla defined on p. 35 were not consistently applied. Brackets were supposed to indicate variant

Interweaving of MT and 1QIsa^a

Parry is a member of the expanded international team created by Emmanuel Tov in the 1990s to expedite the process of publishing the definitive series of texts from the Dead Sea, Oxford's *Discoveries in the Judean Desert*. Parry's contribution to that series will be his work, together with Eugene Ulrich and Frank Moore Cross, on the Samuel fragments. Parry has published widely on the Dead Sea Scrolls,⁴² and, of special interest for the volume under review, he coedited with Elisha Qimron a recent edition of the Great Isaiah Scroll.⁴³ We have here a

readings from 1QIsa^a, the JST, and the Book of Mormon (indicating that MT was the base text), and parentheses were supposed to indicate words not found in Hebrew but added to the translation to make sense of the verse. In a number of instances parentheses should have been used as opposed to brackets (pp. 61 [three occurrences], 104, 156, 184, and 204). There were also instances where MT was in fact followed, so, while an endnote was appropriate, the text should *not* have been bracketed (pp. 54, 153, and 157). On p. 271 at note 110 to Isaiah 13:8 a line in MT/1QIsa^a but not in the Book of Mormon is characterized as a "plus"; I found this confusing, since MT is the base text for bracketing purposes. Isaiah 14:19 at p. 81 is remarkable because this is the lone case in the entire volume where Parry actually follows MT/1QIsa^a ("clothed") over the Book of Mormon/JST ("remnant"). But since he follows MT here, the text should not have been bracketed. In some instances a Book of Mormon variant is followed, being neither marked by brackets nor indicated by a note: Isaiah 3:10 "shall be/is"; Isaiah 3:26 "being/shall be [Parry has "will be"]"; and Isaiah 51:9, where Parry follows the Book of Mormon in deleting "in the generations of old." At Isaiah 1:25, Parry omits MT כִּבּוֹר *kabbor* "as with lye" without a note. (A lacuna appears at this point in 1QIsa^a. Many translators, such as Gileadi, emend MT to בִּכּוּר *bakkur* "in the furnace.")

42. Excluding publications directed to a Latter-day Saint audience, his publications include the following: Donald W. Parry, "4QSam^a and the Tetragrammaton," and Donald W. Parry and Steven W. Booras, "The Dead Sea Scrolls CD-ROM Database Project," both in *Current Research and Technological Developments on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Conference on the Texts from the Judean Desert, Jerusalem, 30 April 1995*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Donald W. Parry, "Retelling Samuel: Echoes of the Books of Samuel in the Dead Sea Scrolls," *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996): 293–306; Florentino García Martínez and Donald W. Parry, *A Bibliography of the Finds in the Desert of Judah, 1970–95* (Leiden: Brill, 1996); Donald W. Parry, "More Fragments of 4QSam^a (4Q51): A Preliminary Edition of 1 Samuel 14:24–24:22," in *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Fifty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Jerusalem Congress, July 20–25, 1997*, ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman, Emanuel Tov, and James C. VanderKam (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society in cooperation with The Shrine of the Book, Israel Museum, 2000), 19–29.

43. Donald W. Parry and Elisha Qimron, *The Great Isaiah Scroll (1QIsa^a): A New Edition* (Leiden: Brill, 1999).

legitimate scrolls scholar who has rubbed shoulders with and learned from the greats in the field. This experience shows in Parry's sense of discernment when deciding whether to include in his text the variant readings of 1QIsa^a. His judgment was excellent in this matter.

For this very reason I wish the notes to this volume were a little fuller. Here we have a world-class scholar of the scrolls making decisions about which readings to follow, but we have almost no indication of how he comes to the conclusions he does. He does not "show his work," as they say in math class. Occasionally his notes will send readers to a discussion of a certain reading in another scholar's work, but he gives no clue as to what the discussion says, leaving readers to track down that other work. In most cases, there is not even such a cross-reference but only his stark decision. I realize that a full-blown textual commentary would have been far beyond the scope of this book, but a sentence here or there indicating why Parry went a certain way would have been very useful to students.

For example, at Isaiah 1:15 Parry accepts a 1QIsa^a variant, indicated in brackets:

Your hands are full of blood,
[your fingers with iniquity].

Why does he accept this reading? An argument could be made against it. The new words appear to be borrowed from Isaiah 59:3 and are not present in 4QIs^f (another Dead Sea manuscript of a portion of Isaiah). As it so happens, in this one case we do have a sense for Parry's reasoning because he mentions this passage in his introduction (p. 9). He accepts the variant because it completes the synonymous parallelism of the passage. I agree with his conclusion here. It is unfortunate that in most instances students do not similarly have an indication of what Parry based his decisions on.

Students should also be aware that this book by its nature does not present all the Isaiah Scroll variants. Students wishing to check

their own judgments against Parry's will need to consult other resources to see the other variants.⁴⁴

While Parry interweaves readings from 1QIsa^a into his base MT text, he does not similarly take into account readings from the Septuagint or other ancient versions. He justifies this decision in his introduction by stating that "the Greek translator (or translators) of the book of Isaiah produced an exceptionally liberal translation that included the translator's personal reflections and interpretations." Parry goes on to explain that "the translator, while undoubtedly earnest in his attempt to create a careful and correct translation, permitted his own biases to govern the translation process" (pp. 33–34). Parry notes that many scholars have observed these tendencies and provides a supporting quotation from Isaac Leo Seeligmann.

I agree with Parry's general comment. Certainly these tendencies are something that must be taken into account when using the Septuagint of Isaiah. How this comment justifies not using the Septuagint *at all* throughout sixty-six chapters of text escapes me, however. A fundamental principle of textual criticism is that even the worst ancient witness for a text can sometimes preserve an original reading. A witness cannot be ignored simply because it is generally unreliable; in each case that witness's reading must be weighed together with the other available evidence. Joseph Blenkinsopp in his textual notes throughout his Anchor Bible volume on Isaiah takes account of the Septuagint reading in almost every verse.⁴⁵ If, as was my impression, the purpose of *Harmonizing Isaiah* is to try to achieve to the greatest extent possible something resembling Isaiah's original

44. For students working in English, the variants are available in Martin Abegg Jr., Peter Flint, and Eugene Ulrich, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Bible: The Oldest Known Bible Translated for the First Time into English* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 267–381.

45. Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, passim. To cite but one of many examples where a reversion from the Septuagint yields an interesting and possible reading, Parry renders Isaiah 3:12 conventionally as

text, then I am dismayed by the wholesale rejection of the ancient versional evidence.⁴⁶

Parry's rejection of evidence from the Septuagint entails a couple of ironies. First, of the Book of Mormon variants that have known ancient manuscript support, a great deal of that support derives from the Septuagint and other ancient versions.⁴⁷ For instance, the well-known variant at 2 Nephi 12:16 ("ships of the sea") is attested in the Septuagint, as mentioned in the footnote to the 1981 edition of the Book of Mormon. So Parry includes the Book of Mormon variants in his text, but he rejects out of hand some of the strongest evidence supporting the possible originality of at least some of those variants.

Another irony is Parry's use of "the [virgin]" to render *הַעַלְמָה* *ha-ʿalmah* in Isaiah 7:14. In his note, Parry justifies this translation as a matter of pure Hebrew, but somehow I am skeptical that if the Septuagint had not read ἡ παρθένος *hē parthenos*, which led to the Vulgate's *virgo*, which led to the KJV's "a virgin," that it would have occurred to Parry to translate *ha-ʿalmah* in this way. I am not objecting to the translation so much as to the notion that the Septuagint is irrelevant support for it.

[And] my people, *children* are their oppressors,
and *women* rule over them.

Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1-39*, 197, following the Septuagint, renders

As for my people, their oppressors *plunder* them,
usurers lord it over them.

In lieu of *עֵלֵל* *meʿolel* "infant," Blenkinsopp understands a verbal form *עֵלְלֵי* *ʿolelu* "devastate," following the Septuagint [*καλαμῶνται kalamōntai*], Targum, and Vulgate [*spoliaverunt*]. For *נָשִׁים* *nashim* "women," he reads *נֹשִׁים* *noshim* "creditors," with the Septuagint, Aquila, Theodotion, and the Targum.

46. In describing his primary sources, Parry refers to the critical apparatus of *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, with its variant readings from other Hebrew manuscripts and ancient versions, as well as to *The Book of Isaiah* in the Hebrew University Bible Project's Edition of the Bible, with its more extensive fourfold apparatus (see p. 30). Why would he bother to mention these tools if he were not going to make full use of them?

47. See LeGrande Davies, "Isaiah: Texts in the Book of Mormon," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 2:700.

Maybe Parry did not want to have to deal with the complications posed by the Septuagint and other versional evidence but rather wanted simply to focus on parsing between MT and 1QIsa^a. That would have been fine and certainly would have had value in its own right. In my view it was not necessary to reject the Septuagint out of hand as a witness in order to proceed in this fashion.

Interweaving of the Book of Mormon and JST

As I have mentioned, this book reflects the vast majority of the textual variants from KJV Isaiah in the Book of Mormon and the JST as part of its text. The introduction offers no explanation for why this was done in this fashion. Apparently, Parry assumes that the Book of Mormon and JST variants of necessity represent (in English) the original text of Isaiah. In my view this is a flawed assumption and accordingly a flawed manner of presentation.

Although the introduction does not explain this methodology, we get a pretty good hint concerning it from Parry's review of Gileadi, in which he states:

Inasmuch as Gileadi's book was written for a Latter-day Saint audience, it should have included representations from the Book of Mormon Isaiah. At the very least the Book of Mormon Isaiah could have been represented in Gileadi's new translation in the form of a separate column juxtaposed by the Gileadi translation, or perhaps represented in parentheses, footnotes, or endnotes. The title chosen by the author—*The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon*—suggests incorporation of the Book of Mormon Isaiah, but it is nowhere to be found.⁴⁸

I remember having a similar reaction to Parry's as to why Gileadi did not engage the Book of Mormon and JST variants.⁴⁹ The alternative

48. Parry, review of *The Book of Isaiah*, 55.

49. Oddly, at Isaiah 13:4 Gileadi does follow the Book of Mormon reading, attributing its loss to a case of "double haplography" in a footnote. Gileadi mentions neither the Book

presentations Parry suggests for Gileadi—parallel columns, *à la* Origen, or an apparatus of some sort—would have worked well in Parry’s volume also. But it is clear from this quotation that Parry’s favored manner of presentation was to bring the variants directly into the text itself, which is in fact what he has done in this book.

I have not the slightest doubt that Parry’s method of incorporating the variants into the text itself was pursued with the very best of intentions. I fully agree with him that the variants are important, they have value, and we need to encourage greater study of them by Latter-day Saint students of scripture. I wish to be very clear that *that* is not the issue. The problem is that by inserting these variants *directly* into what is otherwise a rigorous text critical exercise, Parry conveys the strong impression that all such variants necessarily represent material from Isaiah’s original text. This indeed appears to be Parry’s position. In his review of Gileadi he states the following:

Several Book of Mormon chapters, . . . drawn from the brass plates of Laban, represent the earliest known extant chapters of Isaiah. The chapters predate by centuries other known texts of Isaiah, including the Masoretic Text, the Septuagint, the Dead Sea Scroll editions of Isaiah, and the Aquila, Symmachus, Theodosian, Syriac, Targums, Vulgate, Old Latin, Sahidic [a Coptic dialect], Coptic, Ethiopic, Arabic, and Armenian texts of the Bible. . . . In my opinion, the Isaianic chapters represented in the Book of Mormon are the most accurate and exact sections of Isaiah in existence.⁵⁰

It seems jarring to see Parry exercising careful critical judgment in distinguishing between MT and 1QIsa^a on the one hand but then on the other incorporating the Book of Mormon and JST variants without demonstrating that same sense of judgment. If Parry’s auto-

of Mormon nor John Tvedtnes, who is the source for this “double haplography” argument. This may be because Gileadi’s translation was presented in settings both inside and outside the Church of Jesus Christ.

50. Parry, review of *The Book of Isaiah*, 54–55.

matic exclusion of the Septuagint reflects a case of the “bad witness” fallacy, his automatic privileging of the Book of Mormon and JST variants looks to me like a case of the “best manuscript” fallacy. This would be like a New Testament textual critic deciding that, say, Codex Sinaiticus is the best manuscript of some book and following its readings no matter what, or like a Book of Mormon textual critic always following the readings of the original manuscript (O), irrespective of whether they made the most sense in light of all the evidence in any one particular instance.⁵¹

I learned a little something about this subject from hard personal experience. In the early 1980s I had returned from my mission and was studying at BYU. At some point I became interested in textual criticism, and so I spent time in the library on my own studying the subject. In the course of this personal study I became aware that a number of passages in the Bible occur in which ancient textual evidence paralleled what Joseph Smith had done in the JST. Most of these parallels had not been previously mentioned in print. At that time I shared the assumption that Parry evidently holds that all JST variants necessarily represent textual restorations. Convinced that I had stumbled on evidence supportive of this assumption, I began to write a paper detailing my findings.

I still have in my files a draft of an attempted beginning to that paper, constituting over one hundred handwritten pages. I really did not get very far, though. I simply could not make the JST fit my preconceptions. I began to realize that the JST is not a pure textual restoration but rather incorporates a variety of approaches. While in my view it does include textual restorations, it includes other things as well. I therefore began to develop a more eclectic approach to the

51. Davies, “Isaiah: Texts in the Book of Mormon,” 700–701 n. 45, suggests that the Book of Mormon Isaiah should be granted “full recensional status” and asks whether it should not “be considered as valid as, say, the Dead Sea Isaiah texts?” Subject to the qualification that the Book of Mormon exists only in translation (and all the limitations that that entails), I have no problem with these statements for believing Latter-day Saints (nonbelievers, of course, would not accept it as such). But Parry does not treat the Book of Mormon and JST variants as a recension or like the Dead Sea Isaiah texts; he privileges them in a way he does not 1QIsa^a.

JST.⁵² One cannot simply assume that the entire JST represents just one approach; rather, individual passages have to be examined with a range of possibilities in mind. These possibilities include (1) restorations of original text, (2) restorations of nonoriginal text, (3) alternate translations without positing any change in underlying text, (4) historical corrections of incorrect text, (5) harmonizations of biblical text with revealed doctrine, and (6) midrashic commentary (much like the *targumin* and the genres of “rewritten Bible” and *pesharim* attested among the Dead Sea Scrolls). Readers may recognize this list; it is my adaptation of the suggestions of Robert J. Matthews as to some of the different ways the JST text may relate to the biblical text, which I have elsewhere labeled the “Matthews paradigm.”⁵³

That the JST does not represent a “pure” textual restoration is reflected in the following statements from prominent Latter-day Saint scholars.⁵⁴ Richard Lloyd Anderson, writing about Joseph Smith—Matthew, says:

52. See Kevin L. Barney, “The Joseph Smith Translation and Ancient Texts of the Bible,” *Dialogue* 19/3 (1986): 85–102. An edited version of this article appeared as chapter 11 in *The Word of God: Essays on Mormon Scripture*, ed. Dan Vogel (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1990).

53. See Kevin L. Barney, “Reflections on the Documentary Hypothesis,” *Dialogue* 33/1 (2000): 76–77; and Robert J. Matthews, “A Plainer Translation”: *Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible: A History and Commentary* (Provo, Utah: BYU Press, 1985), 253.

54. My article, “The Joseph Smith Translation,” was largely written while I was an undergraduate and, apart from a couple of student essays, was my first published work. Apparently I was less than articulate in that article, for one day, while browsing at the LDS bookstore near the Chicago temple, I saw that Thomas E. Sherry, “Appendix: Changing Attitudes toward Joseph Smith’s Translation of the Bible,” in *Plain and Precious Truths Restored: The Doctrinal and Historical Significance of the Joseph Smith Translation*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Robert J. Matthews (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1995) had categorized my article as “critical” (in the negative sense). If Richard Lloyd Anderson and Stephen E. Robinson, whose statements below are simply more articulate versions of what I was trying to say, are to be considered “critical” for holding this view, then count me as “critical” also. Consider also the following from John Tvedtnes: “[David Wright, to whom Tvedtnes was responding,] can take some comfort in the fact that I agree with his assessment that the Joseph Smith Translation often has changes that are secondary to the Bible text rather than a restoration of original text. There is much evidence for this, including the fact that the Prophet sometimes made a change which he later modified again or returned to its original form. This does not, however, invalidate everything Joseph Smith added or modified. As with the Book of Mormon, he was probably studying it out in his mind.

In no case did Joseph Smith work with any original language to reach these results. In fact, Greek variant readings simply do not exist for most changes made, whether here or elsewhere in the Inspired Version. Such evidence proves that Joseph Smith worked on the level of meaning and doctrinal harmonization, not narrow textual precision. This is the most dramatic example of the Prophet presenting historical material with long explanations that go far beyond any original writing. This suggests that the Prophet used his basic document—in this case the King James Version—as a point of departure instead of a translation guide. Thus his sweeping changes are only loosely tied to the written record that stimulated the new information. The result is content oriented. One may label this as “translation” only in the broadest sense, for his consistent amplifications imply that the Prophet felt that expansion of a document was the best way to get at meaning. If unconventional as history, the procedure may be a doctrinal gain if distinguished from normal translation procedure, for paraphrase and restatement are probably the best way to communicate without ambiguity. The result may be the paradox of having less literally the words of Bible personalities while possessing more clearly the meanings that their words sought to convey. Thus Joseph Smith’s revisions can best be judged on a conceptual, but not a verbal level.⁵⁵

Stephen E. Robinson’s remarkable *How Wide the Divide?* provides the following:

In some very important passages, he added material that can be shown from subsequent documentary discoveries to have an ancient foundation.” John A. Tvedtnes, review of *New Approaches to the Book of Mormon: Explorations in Critical Methodology*, ed. Brent Lee Metcalfe, in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6/1 (1994): 23.

55. Richard Lloyd Anderson, “Joseph Smith’s Insights into the Olivet Prophecy: Joseph Smith 1 and Matthew 24,” in *Pearl of Great Price Symposium: A Centennial Presentation* (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Publications, 1976), 50.

An area in which Evangelicals almost always misunderstand LDS theology (and in which the average Mormon often does, too) is the relationship between the Joseph Smith Translation (hereafter JST) and the biblical text. The Book of Mormon teaches that “plain and precious” things have been taken out of the Bible (1 Nephi 13:24–29). Both Latter-day Saints and Evangelicals often assume this means that the present biblical books went through a cut-and-paste editing process to remove these things, and that the JST restores the edited texts back to their original forms. However, I see no reason to understand things this way, and in fact I think it is largely erroneous. . . . In 1828 the word *translation* was broader in its meaning than it is now, and the Joseph Smith *translation* (JST) should be understood to contain additional revelation, alternate readings, prophetic commentary or midrash, harmonization, clarification and corrections of the original as well as corrections *to* the original. . . . Joseph Smith often saw more than one meaning in a passage and brought many of these explicitly to our attention by means of the JST. Certainly the existence of a JST variant reading for a passage ought *not* to imply that the KJV is *incorrect*, since the Book of Mormon and Doctrine and Covenants sometimes agree with the KJV rather than the JST.

Most of the objections I hear concerning the JST result from assuming we know what Joseph was doing and how he was doing it, and from assuming a view of the texts and a translational philosophy on the part of Joseph Smith that cannot be established from the documents. For example, Evangelicals might assume that a “prophetic” translation would be one that restored the *original* text, word for word and without any additions and subtractions, but this is not an LDS assumption. Joseph Smith did not explain his “translation” process. He did not describe the parameters of his work or explain either the procedures or the principles he employed, but it seems to me that his main concern was not

merely to reproduce God's word to ancient prophets but also to produce a correct text for the use of Latter-day Saints in the latter days.

I happen to believe Joseph did frequently restore ancient information in the JST and that the JST is "correct" in all its doctrinal particulars, but this does not necessarily mean that the received text is corrupt or that the JST always represents the original, unexpurgated text of Matthew, Mark, Luke or John. I do not personally assume this. I affirm only that the JST is "inspired" and that the LDS should consult it as a supplement to their canonical Scriptures.⁵⁶

The Book of Mormon also involves an inspired translation from the gold plates. Scholars take different views concerning how "tight" or "loose" Joseph's control⁵⁷ over the language of the plates was. My own approach is, once again, eclectic. I believe we need to seriously consider a spectrum of approaches in various passages as the evidence in each case warrants.⁵⁸

Nevertheless, even if one insists on a strict "tight control" view of the entire translation of the Book of Mormon, it would not necessarily follow that the Book of Mormon variants would represent Isaiah's original text. In order to simplify this discussion, let us assume, for the

56. Craig L. Blomberg and Stephen E. Robinson, *How Wide the Divide? A Mormon and an Evangelical in Conversation* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 1997), 63–65.

57. For the concept of tight vs. loose control, see Royal Skousen, "Towards a Critical Edition of the Book of Mormon," *BYU Studies* 30/1 (1990): 50–56.

58. The presentation of Isaiah 29 in this book is a good illustration of the difficulties inherent in simply incorporating the Book of Mormon and JST variants into the text. In this chapter Parry gives up on his bracketing system, but he continues to incorporate his own translations. It would take several hours of comparative work for students to sort out what derives from the Book of Mormon, the JST, and Parry's translation of MT. For details concerning this chapter, Parry cites an excellent article by Robert A. Cloward, "Isaiah 29 and the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, ed. Donald W. Parry and John W. Welch (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1998), 191–247. In that article Cloward reviews Isaiah 29 in its Isaianic context, in its Book of Mormon context, and in its JST context, seeing the later versions as containing *peshet*-like "likening" commentary on the text. By artificially creating a single version of this chapter, however, Parry obliterates Cloward's textured reading of the different accounts.

sake of argument, that all sixty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah were penned by Isaiah the son of Amoz in the latter half of the eighth century B.C. The source for the Isaiah quotations and paraphrases found in the Book of Mormon was the plates of brass. It should be perfectly obvious that some sort of textual transmission had to exist between Isaiah's original text and the plates of brass. We do not know how many copies or copies of copies intervened between Isaiah's original text and the plates of brass. It has been suggested that the plates of brass may have represented a northern recension of the scriptures;⁵⁹ if so, the plates of brass may have undergone a somewhat different textual development than the proto-MT and any other Hebrew textual traditions in the south. Furthermore, the plates of brass were transliterated into Egyptian script or, possibly, translated into the Egyptian language (Mosiah 1:3–4). Such a transliteration (or translation) would be a substantial additional complicating factor in the transmission of the text.

In the New World, the plates of brass text was recopied, in most cases one additional time onto the small plates of Nephi, but in some cases two additional times, first onto the large plates of Nephi and from there onto the plates of Mormon. We do not know the precise mechanics involved in how these texts were transcribed. For instance, when quoted during discourses, did a scribe record what the speaker said? Did the speaker actually have the plates of brass physically in front of him, or did he at times rely on memory during his discourse? Did someone visually copy the plates of brass text into the small plates of Nephi or large plates of Nephi, as applicable? Was the text translated again from the language of the plates of brass into some other language? No matter how it was done, whenever you copy a text, you create the potential for textual variation.

At the conclusion of his excellent article on the Book of Mormon text of the Isaiah passages, Royal Skousen indicates that trying to recover the English text is a “complex” matter.⁶⁰ Trying to recover the

59. Andrew C. Skinner, “Nephi’s Lessons to His People: The Messiah, the Land, and Isaiah 48–49 in 1 Nephi 19–22,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 95–97.

60. Royal Skousen, “Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations in the Book of Mormon,” in *Isaiah in the Book of Mormon*, 389.

ancient text of Isaiah is at least as complicated a process and perhaps more so given the different languages and greater antiquity involved. Yet, vis-à-vis the Book of Mormon and JST variants, Parry's book does not take that fundamental complexity fully into account.

In contrast with Parry's methodology in this volume is what John Tvedtnes has done in his lengthy, unpublished study of the Book of Mormon Isaiah variants.⁶¹ Tvedtnes studied each variant in light of the available evidence (including the ancient versions) and ultimately grouped them into the following categories:

- superiority of the Book of Mormon over the KJV as a translation from MT Hebrew
 - version support for the Book of Mormon
 - evidence of scribal error in ancient times, with evidence favoring the Book of Mormon
 - evidence indicating that the Book of Mormon is from a more ancient text than MT
 - singular-plural distinctions
 - the Book of Mormon and KJV as equally valid translations from MT Hebrew
 - the Book of Mormon disagreement with KJV/MT in instances where at least some versions also disagree, without supporting the Book of Mormon or KJV
 - items found elsewhere
 - deletion of KJV italicized words in the Book of Mormon
 - change of KJV italicized words in the Book of Mormon
 - Book of Mormon variations from KJV with no explanation
 - uncorrected Book of Mormon errors
 - Book of Mormon errors subsequently corrected
 - attempts at updating the KJV language in the Book of Mormon

61. John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Textual Variants in the Book of Mormon" (FARMS, 1981). Selected examples from this study were published in an abbreviated format as John A. Tvedtnes, "Isaiah Variants in the Book of Mormon," in *Isaiah and the Prophets: Inspired Voices from the Old Testament*, ed. Monte S. Nyman (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 1984), 165–77.

- changes in post-1830 editions of the Book of Mormon
- internal variations in the Book of Mormon quotations of Isaiah
- paraphrases of Isaiah in the Book of Mormon

In my view, Tvedtnes's approach to the evidence is appropriately eclectic.

David Wright has written a vigorous critique of the Isaiah variants in the Book of Mormon, concluding that the variants have nothing to do with antiquity and therefore support his view that the Book of Mormon is not an ancient work.⁶² Wright addresses common Latter-day Saint misconceptions, responds to Tvedtnes's study, and offers a kind of tract designed to cause its readers to lose faith in the Book of Mormon. His article is both lengthy and highly technical, and a complete response to it is beyond the scope of this review. Nevertheless, since its subject matter does relate to that of Parry's book, I will offer a few brief comments on it here.⁶³

I agree with certain of Wright's broad conclusions—namely, that the KJV of Isaiah forms the base text for the Book of Mormon Isaiah passages,⁶⁴ that translation errors occur in the KJV of Isaiah, and, *pace* Skousen, that Joseph Smith probably understood the significance of KJV italics.⁶⁵ I also agree with many of his minor observations. For instance, I would agree with Wright that the Septuagint does not support the Book of Mormon variant at Isaiah 48:14. Nevertheless, overall I do not view the evidence the same way Wright does. This fundamental difference in our perceptions is largely a function of the differing assumptions we bring to the task.

62. For information about Wright's critique, see note 19 above.

63. In my view Tvedtnes's study is quite important but has languished unpublished (except in part), largely unread and underappreciated. I believe a vigorous critique such as Wright's was just what the doctor ordered to enable Tvedtnes to go back and revise, improve, and hone his study (it is to be hoped) for full publication. For this, I think Wright is deserving of our thanks.

64. Skousen, "Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations," 373–77, gives a demonstration of this point.

65. Italics in the KJV were not used for emphasis. Rather, they were used to designate words that are not literally present in the underlying language text but must be added for English sense.

If completely naturalistic assumptions are applied, then the Book of Mormon simply cannot be an authentic ancient text. Even if God did not exist, Lehi could have lived, his family could have crossed the ocean, his descendants could have had a long history in the New World, they could have created a record on gold plates, and the young Joseph Smith could have stumbled upon this ancient record and dug it out of the ground. However, naturalistic assumptions cannot account for Joseph's translation of the record unless one believes he intellectually deciphered the unknown script on the plates (and I know of no one, believer or not, who would accept that). Therefore, the Book of Mormon can only be authentically ancient if God does indeed exist and intervenes in the affairs of men, thus making it possible that Joseph Smith really did translate the record by the gift and power of God, as he claimed.

Since Wright's assumptions are purely naturalistic, it necessarily follows that for him the Book of Mormon simply *cannot* be authentically ancient. If I shared those assumptions, I think I would aver with Sterling McMurrin: "you don't get books from angels and translate them by miracles; it is just that simple,"⁶⁶ and be done with it. For Wright personally, the exercise of writing his article must have been superfluous, unless he retained unresolved doubts about his naturalistic position.

Since I believe in God and have received a spiritual witness of the Book of Mormon pursuant to the process described in Moroni 10:3–5, I, of course, see possibilities where Wright sees none. I reread both Tvedtnes's and Wright's studies together in connection with writing this review. As I did so, I once again marveled at the Prophet's amazing sensitivity to the text. Although I could cite many examples of how my way of seeing differs from Wright's, in the interest of space I will share only two:

Isaiah 9:3 KJV reads in part: "Thou hast multiplied *the nation* [גוֹיִם *haggoy*], and *not* [לֹא *lo*] increased the joy." Second Nephi 19:3 omits the negative "not." Tvedtnes notes as follows:

66. Blake Ostler, "An Interview with Sterling McMurrin," *Dialogue* 17/1 (1984): 25.

Jewish scholars of the MT sometimes realized that a mistake was present in the biblical text. But since it was forbidden to alter the sacred scripture, they left the error as a *Ketib* (“that which is written”), while adding a footnoted *Qere* (“that which is read”) to be vocalized in reading the text. In this passage, the *Ketib* of MT has the negative particle, while the *Qere* deletes it, as do twenty Hebrew manuscripts, all of which substitute the word *lw* (for *l*, which is pronounced the same), “for him.” Compare the same expression in Job 12:23 and Isaiah 26:15, both of which are like BM [the Book of Mormon].⁶⁷

The *Qere* reading can be seen in Gileadi’s translation, which agrees with it:

Thou has enlarged the nation
and increased *its* joy.

In his response, Wright grudgingly acknowledges that the negative was indeed perceived to be problematic in antiquity, but he opines that Joseph could have figured this out on his own. He further observes that the Book of Mormon did not manifest the solution of the traditional Hebrew reading by replacing the negative with the preposition and pronoun “for him/it.” While this is true, I would argue a very good reason exists for this. The traditional Hebrew reading was an attempt to correct the mistaken MT, but it too was a mistake. The correct text can be discerned by paying attention to the parallelism of the couplet. It seems reasonably clear that the words *haggoy lo’* “the nation not” represent a corruption of *הַגִּילָהּ* *haggilah* “the rejoicing,”⁶⁸ which then properly parallels “the joy.” As correctly rendered by Parry,⁶⁹ the lines should read:

67. Tvedtnes, “Isaiah Variants,” 171–72.

68. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1990), 688 at apparatus note 2a; Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 1–39*, 246.

69. This passage would be another example in which I would follow Parry over Gileadi.

You have increased the rejoicing,
you have magnified the joy;

Therefore, neither the *Ketib* nor the *Qere* reading is correct; the text had been corrupted prior to the time the *Qere* reading arose as a response to the *Ketib*. Wright mentions this proposed emendation of the text and complains that the Book of Mormon retains a corrupt text by keeping the word *nation*. So, to summarize, the Book of Mormon successfully deletes the negative, rightly avoids the traditional Hebrew reading, but fails to replace “nation” with “rejoicing.” Here I believe Wright displays unrealistically rigid assumptions about the supposed perfection of the Book of Mormon text. As we have suggested, the Book of Mormon does not represent a perfect textual restoration. The Book of Mormon and JST variants often reflect a fundamental conservatism, making only the least change possible to achieve the desired effect. By far the most substantive problem with the KJV is the presence of the negative; by using a scalpel (rather than a bludgeon) and excising that one word, the Book of Mormon achieves a substantial correction of the KJV’s blatantly erroneous reading. Since the KJV is followed as the base text, it necessarily follows that this correction interacts with and is expressed in terms of the extant KJV English. This basic fact does not prevent the Book of Mormon reading from being, in this case, in effect either a partial textual restoration or an improved translation. That which Wright sees as counting against Joseph, I see as buttressing Tvedtnes’s original point. Where Wright sees a miss, I see a rather amazing hit.

The second example I will mention occurs at Isaiah 10:29, which reads in part in the KJV as follows: “*Ramah* is afraid; Gibeah of Saul is fled.” Second Nephi 20:29 replaces “*Ramah*” with “*Ramath*.” Tvedtnes observes that *Ramath* “would be the more ancient form of the name, with the old feminine *-ath* suffix which, in later (usually even biblical) Hebrew disappeared in the pausal form of the noun,”⁷⁰ being replaced by the later feminine ending *-ah*. As an example, Tvedtnes notes that

70. Tvedtnes, “Isaiah Variants,” 172.

the preceding verse (Isaiah 10:28) has Aiath, with the *-t* feminine ending (represented in the KJV by *-ath*). Tvedtnes points out that this was written with an *-h* ending as Aiah in 1QIsa^a, with the *-t* being added above the line, apparently as an afterthought. I have seen this same phenomenon Tvedtnes describes, particularly in place names, which tended to preserve the archaic *-t* longer than other words.⁷¹

Wright has three objections to the Book of Mormon variant here. First, he notes that the *Book of Mormon Critical Text*⁷² observes that the Peshitta has *rameta* and the Targum *ramata*, forms that show a *-t* ending for the place name. Wright rejects this support, because these versions generally have a form ending in *-t* where the MT has Ramah. Wright therefore concludes that this is simply the way those versions render the underlying text. While Wright is correct, in my view these readings should not be understood apart from Tvedtnes's point. To me the Syriac and Aramaic *-t* forms are significant because they show what the name would have been like without the linguistic evolution of the feminine ending experienced by Hebrew. Consider a different example, in Joshua 19:12: Here we read of a Levitical city named Daberath at the foot of Mt. Tabor within the tribe of Issachar. In Joshua 21:28, however, the name of this same city is given in its later Hebrew form, "Daboreh." The Aramaic (*dabbarta*) and Syriac (*deboritha*) forms of this name attest to the fact that without the shift to *-h* endings, the Hebrew name of the town would have continued with its *-t* ending as Daberath. Unlike the case of Daberath, we do not have an attestation of the early unbound (i.e., lexical) form Ramath in the Old Testament, but the general linguistic evolution of Hebrew coupled with the specific support of the Aramaic and Syriac cognates render it highly probable that the more ancient name of the city was "Ramath" as the Book of Mormon has it. Wright concedes this, calling it a "linguistic fact," but I do believe that the Aramaic and Syriac

71. Note that some Hebrew feminines still retain a *-t* ending in their unbound singular forms, such as אָחוֹת *ʾachot* [sister] and בְּרִית *berit* [covenant].

72. *Book of Mormon Critical Text: A Tool for Scholarly Reference* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1986).

forms provide a useful illustration for those who are not students of Hebrew.

Wright’s second objection is that the construct form of Ramah is sometimes transliterated in the KJV as “Ramath,” and Joseph Smith could have picked up that spelling from one of these other passages. Wright’s observation is correct; “Ramath” does occur in the KJV, and Joseph could have picked up this spelling from one of those passages. But, while this is certainly possible, is it likely? In order to have a basis for judgment, the following table sets forth all the forms of Ramah in the KJV Old Testament⁷³ of which I am aware:

Ramah Forms in the Old Testament

| KJV Spelling | Grammatical Form | Number of Occurrences or Citation |
|---------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Ramah | Unbound feminine singular noun | 36 |
| Ramath-mizpeh | Singular construct ⁷⁴ | Joshua 13:26 |
| Ramath of the south | Singular construct | Joshua 19:18 |
| Ramath-lehi | Singular construct | Judges 15:17 |
| Ramathite | Gentilic ⁷⁵ | 1 Chronicles 27:27 |
| Ramoth | Plural | 8 |

73. The word appears once in a New Testament quotation as “Rama,” in Matthew 2:18.

74. In any expression *X of Y*, the noun *X* is in the construct state. The construct noun and the absolute noun (the *Y*) following it reflect a genitival relationship and have the nuances of meaning associated with the preposition “of.”

75. A gentilic is a form of an adjective designating a country or place or its inhabitants, as in “Israeli.”

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|--------------|
| Ramoth-gilead | Plural construct | 19 |
| Ramathaim-zophim | Dual ⁷⁶ | 1 Samuel 1:1 |
| Remeth (= Ramoth?) | (Corrupted?) plural | Joshua 19:21 |

Ramah means “height” in Hebrew and was the name for several different cities. Note that its most basic spelling, Ramah, is also the most common, occurring more than all other forms combined. The plural, plural construct, gentilic, and dual forms all involve spelling changes that make them unlikely candidates as a source for the Book of Mormon Ramath. The singular construct Ramath-mizpeh is unlikely because of the compound hyphenated form used in the KJV transliteration. This leaves us with only two possibilities: (1) “Ramath of the south,” and this only because the KJV translated the second part of the name rather than using the compound hyphenated form, and (2) “Ramath-lehi,” and this only because of Wright’s speculation as to whether Joseph might have noticed this one because of the possible connection between the *-lehi* element of the compound and the Book of Mormon’s “Lehi.”

While Wright’s argument is possible, it strikes me as unlikely. The putative sources for the spelling change occur in Joshua and Judges, far removed from Isaiah. Would Joseph have even taken notice of these other spellings? He had not yet studied Hebrew, so he would have had no way of knowing that “Ramath” was a related form to the more common “Ramah.” If Joseph were influenced by Ramath-lehi, why did he not reproduce the full hyphenated form? Also, what is the motive for Joseph to make the change from Ramah to Ramath? I frankly cannot see one. Further, as Wright himself notes, the Book of

76. Dual is a number of a noun (the others being singular or plural), usually used to indicate things that appear in pairs, such as parts of the body.

Mormon does use the form Ramah at Ether 15:11,⁷⁷ so it is difficult to see that Joseph could have had a general objection to that spelling.

Wright's third objection is that this could be a dictation or copying error. Yes, that is possible, but no evidence exists to support that claim. This verse is not on the extant portion of the original manuscript. Ramah and Ramath are not homophones; the pronunciation of the *-ath* ending would have been distinctive from the *-ah* ending. In the printer's manuscript, Skousen's sigla indicate that the *h* in Ramath is only partially legible, but the *t* is completely legible.⁷⁸

Wright maintains that the evidence is not conclusive. I would agree; I never thought that it was. I am nevertheless very impressed by what appears to me to be another hit by the Prophet. Wright has to have his escape hatch, and I will grant it to him; no one is compelled to see this variant as the restoration of the ancient form of the name Ramah. Nevertheless, that is the way I see it, and I think the Book of Mormon's change from Ramah to Ramath is truly remarkable.

Let us now return to Parry's book. The practice of incorporating the Book of Mormon and JST variants directly into the text raises a number of other methodological concerns, such as the following:

1. *Which variants were not included?* According to the introduction (p. 31), Parry includes "significant" or "major" Book of Mormon Isaiah readings that are at variance with the KJV. It is unclear where the dividing line is between variants that are significant and those that are not. If it is significant to add the word *yea* in Isaiah 13:15 (p. 77), what then is left as insignificant? Since Parry is presenting all sixty-six chapters of Isaiah, given his premise I would have thought he would have included absolutely all the variants. As it is, no good way exists for interested students to know what he included versus what he excluded. The selection of the variants for inclusion appears to have been subjective and not based on a consistently applied methodology.

77. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Original Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Extant Text* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 552.

78. Royal Skousen, ed., *The Printer's Manuscript of the Book of Mormon: Typographical Facsimile of the Entire Text in Two Parts* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2001), 1:203.

For example, the Ramah/Ramath variant we described above is not mentioned in Parry's text; he follows MT Ramah (p. 71). Other overlooked or omitted variants I noted were stay/staff from Isaiah 3:1, an insertion of "and" into Isaiah 3:9, and the deletion of "one" from Isaiah 14:32. The failure to include the "and" in Isaiah 3:9 is especially surprising, given that the Book of Mormon variant is attested by 1QIsa^a. Readers have no way of knowing whether these were simply missed or were intentional omissions, and if the latter, why they were omitted.

An added layer of complexity to Parry's task is that the English texts of the Book of Mormon and JST have had a history of their own. Parry has used the best available tools for deriving the text of the Book of Mormon and JST,⁷⁹ but he gives readers no information concerning the choices he has made with respect to the English text. For instance, Parry used Skousen's work on the original manuscript (O) and the printer's manuscript (P), and the 1830 and 1981 editions as the sources for his Book of Mormon readings, but these readings are all presented simply by their Book of Mormon citation without a delineation of their source. So in Isaiah 2:9 Parry renders

And mankind has [not] been humbled
and man has [not] been brought down; do not forgive
them.

The first "not" did not appear in P or the 1830 edition (O is not extant for this text) but was added by Joseph Smith to the 1837 edition; of course, it also appears in the 1981 edition. In this case I agree with Parry's choice, but I wonder whether other such cases might exist where I would not agree. Readers are not given the information necessary to evaluate the choice made. For most purposes, Parry's presentation of the Book of Mormon text would have been entirely adequate. When used as part of a rigorous text critical exercise, how-

79. Including in particular Skousen, *The Original Manuscript* and *The Printer's Manuscript*, and a prepublication copy of Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *The Joseph Smith Translation: Original Documents* (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, forthcoming).

ever, I would have preferred more specific notes as to the derivation of the Book of Mormon or JST readings, at least in cases where any doubt exists concerning whether that reading should be followed as part of the English text.⁸⁰

2. *Why is variant text assumed to be original, but nonvariant text is not?* Parry's premise is that the Book of Mormon and JST represent the most ancient and most valuable text of Isaiah. Therefore, the variants from KJV in these works are considered sacrosanct and allowed to override all other considerations. If this is true, however, why is the nonvariant text subject to correction by MT and 1QIsa^a? Given his premise, it would seem as though it should not be. I personally think it is fine for him to override the KJV text in that case, but then I do not share his premise.

To illustrate this point, consider Isaiah 4:2, which Parry renders

In that day the branch of the LORD will be for beauty
and glory,
and the fruit of the earth will be the pride and honor
for them that are escaped of Israel [and Judah].

The evidence for the last words of the verse lines up as follows: “escaped of Israel” (both MT and Book of Mormon) and “escaped of Israel and Judah” (1QIsa^a). Parry has no problem overriding the Book of Mormon reading when it does *not* vary from MT. If the Book of Mormon reading *does* vary from MT, however, he follows the Book of Mormon (or JST) reading in virtually every instance. This is a curious methodology that requires explanation.⁸¹

80. I acknowledge that my own work on the JST suffered from this same defect. When the critical text of Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews becomes available (to match Skousen's work on the Book of Mormon), citing the variants more precisely will be easier.

81. In this example, if the Book of Mormon is the earliest text and MT the latest, Parry has to account for the loss of “and Judah” from the Book of Mormon, its recovery in 1QIsa^a, and its subsequent loss again in MT. Perhaps 1QIsa^a reflects a different textual tradition from the Book of Mormon/MT; in that case, why would Parry assume it to be primary and the Book of Mormon secondary?

3. *What principles govern when the Book of Mormon and JST diverge?* As Skousen has demonstrated,⁸² the JST for the Isaiah passages where Book of Mormon parallels exist generally follows the 1830 edition of the Book of Mormon. Occasionally, however, the JST diverges from the Book of Mormon reading. What principle Parry follows in such cases is unclear.

For example, at Isaiah 2:21b, Parry renders

for fear of the LORD [will come upon them],
and the [majesty of the Lord][will smite them] when he
arises to shake terribly the earth.

The second bracketed variant in these lines, “majesty of the Lord,” derives from the JST. The MT reads “glory of his majesty” and the Book of Mormon reads “majesty of his glory.” On what basis did Parry select the JST over the Book of Mormon? If one were intent on choosing either the JST or the Book of Mormon, one could make an argument for the priority of the Book of Mormon text, because the MT could then be accounted for by simple transposition, making the JST an explanatory gloss. Perhaps Parry was influenced by the fact that 2 Nephi 12:10 and 19 both retain KJV “glory of his majesty,” suggesting that the Book of Mormon variant might have reflected an English scribal error or, possibly, an ancient scribal error. Or perhaps Parry took the view that the JST variant should control as being the later in time. We simply are not told.

4. *Because of the composite nature of the presentation, we do not have a complete copy of Parry’s treatment of MT v. 1QIsa^a.* The Book of Mormon and JST variants from KJV Isaiah are readily accessible to Latter-day Saint students of scripture. By building those variants into the text, we are excluded from seeing how Parry would have handled any variants between MT and 1QIsa^a that happen to be in the same position as one of the Book of Mormon or JST variants. We are also excluded from seeing Parry’s own translation of those portions of the Hebrew text.

82. Skousen, “Textual Variants in the Isaiah Quotations,” 387–88.

5. *The presentation does not adequately distinguish between hard textual variants and alternate translations.* The style of the textual notes is very similar to those used in the *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*;⁸³ Parry may have used that as a model. Every footnote in the *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible* gives a hard textual variant—that is, a variant that actually exists in one of the scrolls or some other ancient manuscript. Similarly, in this volume, every endnote and every instance of bracketed text from 1QIsa^a represents a hard textual variant from that source. These circumstances contribute to the impression readers get that the Book of Mormon and JST variants are also being given as hard textual variants that existed in an ancient manuscript source at one time.⁸⁴

I have already argued against that position as being correct across the board; here I would like to highlight one of the different possibilities I have previously mentioned, if only because it seems to be so rarely considered by the Saints: that some of these variants may be alternate *translations* of the same Hebrew text underlying MT.

Most people approach this issue with an overly narrow view of what a translation can be.⁸⁵ For them, translation can only be very literal, *verbum pro verbo*, word for word. But translations can also be freer, *sensus de sensu*, meaning for meaning. The word *targum* is Aramaic for “translation,” but such translations tend to be free. As Parry mentions, the Septuagint rendering of Isaiah has been characterized as having a relatively free approach to the *Vorlage* (original Hebrew text from which the LXX of Isaiah was created). In particular,

83. Ulrich, *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*.

84. Parry assumes that all the Book of Mormon and JST variants were Hebrew variations that actually existed in an ancient manuscript. But that is not necessarily the case. I am suggesting that many of the English Book of Mormon variants may simply be alternative *translations* of the *same* Hebrew word that existed in MT (without an ancient variant). As such, the Book of Mormon in that case would not be represented by a different ancient manuscript.

85. As a corrective to this restrictive view, I would recommend Hugh Nibley’s chapter “Translated Correctly?” in his book *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 47–55, in which he expands on the definition of Wilamowitz: “A translation is a statement in the translator’s own words of what he thinks the author had in mind” (pp. 47–48).

Arie Van der Kooij has noted the following tendencies in such a free translation: “the aim of writing good Koine Greek [for the Book of Mormon we could substitute good English], both with respect to syntax and to idiom; inconsistency, or variety, of lexical choices; different word order as well; grammatical and contextual changes, such as harmonizations; [and] that of adding or subtracting words or phrases.”⁸⁶ If the Septuagint of Isaiah is a translation, and it is, then perhaps we should consider a broader view of the possibility of translation in the Book of Mormon and JST.

Many of the variants Parry includes in brackets in his text from the Book of Mormon and JST appear to me to represent alternate translations rather than hard textual variants. For instance, Isaiah 3:7 reads in part “for in my house [there] is neither bread nor clothing.” Note 33 tells us that the bracketed word *there* is present in the JST, in 2 Nephi 13:7, and in 1QIsa^a, but not in MT. First of all, this note is in error; based on Parry’s own edition of 1QIsa^a, I see no distinction in text between 1QIsa^a and MT.⁸⁷ Second, it is not even clear to me what Hebrew word could be posited that would result in the addition of “there.” This is purely a matter of English translation. The Hebrew (both MT and 1QIsa^a) has לֹא שָׁמָּה, which is a negation of existence, usually translated something like “there is not.” KJV renders “for in my house is neither bread nor clothing,” which is acceptable; the Book of Mormon and JST simply have an alternate rendering including the word *there*, which is also acceptable.

The very next Book of Mormon/JST variant appears at Isaiah 3:8: “because their tongues and their deeds [have been] against the

86. Arie Van der Kooij, “The Old Greek of Isaiah in Relation to the Qumran Texts of Isaiah: Some General Comments,” in *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings: Papers Presented to the International Symposium on the Septuagint and Its Relations to the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Writings* (Manchester, 1990), ed. George J. Brooke and Barnabas Lindars (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992), 203.

87. The *Dead Sea Scrolls Bible*, 275, which follows 1QIsa^a as its base text, renders “In my house *there* is neither food nor clothing.” It appears that someone assumed from this that 1QIsa^a reflects the word *there* in Hebrew, while MT does not. This assumption is incorrect. I suspect a research assistant must have done this, for Parry would surely have understood that 1QIsa^a was not at variance with MT here.

LORD,” where the Book of Mormon/JST read “have been” and the KJV reads “are.” The Hebrew text does not have any verb here at all; does Parry mean to suggest that a verb dropped out? The Book of Mormon strikes me as more likely being a (properly) interpretive rendering of the MT. The English perfect “have been” stresses events that began in the past and continue to the present. The leaders of Jerusalem and Judah did not just all of a sudden turn from the Lord; their present course was a continuation of past actions. As I peruse Parry’s book, it appears to me that there are many examples like these that would be better understood as alternate translations rather than hard textual variants.

Conclusion

I believe that a new translation of Isaiah incorporating readings from the Great Isaiah Scroll geared to the needs of Latter-day Saint students is a good idea. This volume goes a long way toward providing that study aid. The translations from the Hebrew are well done. The formatting is, in my judgment, excellent. And Parry shows a good sense of discernment in deciding whether to follow MT or 1QIsa^a. It is a pleasure to see such a fine scholar at work, especially for a Latter-day Saint audience.

Many Latter-day Saints likely share Parry’s view that virtually all Book of Mormon and JST variants represent a pure restoration from Isaiah’s original text as he penned it. They will therefore perhaps appreciate and make use of the interweaving of those variants into the MT/1QIsa^a text. In fact, given his premises, I think Parry did a good job of folding the Book of Mormon/JST variants into his text; I suspect this was not easy to do.

As should be clear by now, I am among those faithful Saints who do not share Parry’s assumptions about the Book of Mormon/JST variants. Since in my view those variants represent different things—including textual restorations but certainly not limited to textual restorations—for me, the decision to bring those variants directly into the text represents a fundamental methodological problem with this book.

Parry could have gone any number of other directions that would have ameliorated this problem. One possibility would have been to present the Book of Mormon/JST variants separately, either in parallel columns or in an apparatus of some kind. This would have made them available for close study by students while still allowing different variants to be understood in different ways, as the evidence might warrant in each particular case. That might have been messy, however, and I suspect that Parry wanted the unified, seamless presentation he was able to show off to good effect with his formatting.

If Parry really had his heart set on putting the variants into the text itself, he could have included a lengthy explanation of his methodology in the introduction. That way students might understand that the Book of Mormon/JST variants were being put forward for their value generally but not because they were necessarily to be seen as restorations of text (perhaps designating them with a different type of brackets or otherwise distinguishing them from the MT/1QIsa^a variants). Another possibility would have been to forego a treatment of the variants in this study entirely and give them a separate treatment altogether, perhaps in a response to Wright.⁸⁸

In any event, the decision to put the variants directly into the text has been made, and considering alternatives is too late now. In my view this aspect of the book is unfortunate.

Nevertheless, if the inclusion of the variants into the text causes Latter-day Saint students of scripture to look at the variants anew and to take the variants more seriously than they have in the past; if it leads them to further, more detailed study of the texts of Isaiah, the Book of Mormon and the JST; and if in the course of that study they should come to a more mature understanding of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the result will have been a net gain.

88. I believe an eclectic can engage Wright's study, as I have done on a small scale here, but I have my doubts that one who makes simplistic assumptions about across-the-board textual restoration would be able to respond to it as effectively.

THREE BOOKS ON JEWISH AND MORMON THEMES

Jeffrey R. Chadwick

President Ezra Taft Benson admonished us, “We need to know more about the Jews, and the Jews ought to know more about the Mormons.”¹ Three recently published books on Jewish and Mormon themes may assist Latter-day Saints in exploring the relationship to their “cousins” of the house of Judah. The newest and first reviewed, *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*, is a compilation of scholarly yet spiritual treatments on both subjects and

1. Ezra Taft Benson, *The Teachings of Ezra Taft Benson* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1988), 97.

Review of Raphael Jospe, Truman G. Madsen, and Seth Ward, eds. *Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism*. London: Associated University Presses, 2001. 225 pp., with an appendix and subject and source indexes. \$39.95.

Review of Frank J. Johnson and Rabbi William J. Leffler. *Jews and Mormons: Two Houses of Israel*. Hoboken, N.J.: Ktav Publishing House, 2000. xii + 243 pp., with three appendixes and a glossary. \$24.95.

Review of Harris Lenowitz. *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. viii + 297 pp., with three indexes. \$19.95.

should be a valuable source for anyone interested in the intersection of Mormon and Jewish thought. The second, *Jews and Mormons: Two Houses of Israel*, presents two rather narrow views of the respective religions but may still be useful to Mormons in terms of an overall understanding of what it means to be Jewish. The last reviewed, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights*, is perhaps the most fascinating, even though it does not deal specifically with Mormon themes.



Covenant and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism

This volume is the published record of a scholarly conference held at the University of Denver's Center for Judaic Studies in 1998. The conference itself was the brainchild of Stanley M. Wagner, founding director of the Center for Judaic Studies, and Daniel C. Rona, the well-known Israeli Latter-day Saint whose Ensign Foundation provided substantial financial support for the conference. The Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies also contributed additional funding for the conference. But the book itself is the result of the tenacity of its three coeditors, especially Raphael Jospe and Truman G. Madsen, whose dedication to bridging the understanding gap that separates the two Israelite peoples has been unflagging.

Beginning with an introduction by coeditor Seth Ward, which gives a chapter-by-chapter preview that could easily have been published in lieu of this review, the book is divided into four parts. Each part features two or three chapters that, as Ward describes them, "debate scriptural foundations, in both the Hebrew Bible and . . . Mormon scriptures," as well as issues of Sabbath, temple, and "the development of ideas about covenant in the works of Joseph Smith and in contemporary Jewish theology" (p. 14). But the reader soon discovers that this is no debate in the classic sense. Not a single subject is approached from both Jewish and Mormon sides. The various authors each wind up pursuing a separate path. This loose focus not-

withstanding, the results of all four parts of the book are informative and thought provoking. A final and very useful contribution by Ward entitled "A Literature Survey of Mormon-Jewish Studies" appears as an appendix.

Part 1, "Scriptural Foundations of the Covenant," features chapters entitled "Biblical Voices on Chosenness," by Tikva Frymer-Kensky, and "Covenant in the Book of Mormon," by Daniel C. Peterson. Book of Mormon perspectives will understandably be explored by Latter-day Saint authors in such compilations, but whenever I see a pairing like this, I am troubled that the Bible is so often left to the non-Latter-day Saint partner. Certainly no one understands the fulness of the Israelite covenant, as presented throughout the Bible, in the way that Latter-day Saints do. The Bible is, after all, first among equals among our standard works. A competent Latter-day Saint presentation on biblical voices would be appropriate, particularly since the offering by Frymer-Kensky, professor of Bible at the University of Chicago Divinity School, amounts to little more than a recap of selected Deuteronomic themes with no reference to Judaism until the final page.

The absence of endnotes in the article is troubling. At least one endnote should have been provided for the reference to Moshe Dothan's archaeological work at the Philistine site of Ashdod in Israel. Even the reference to Dothan's work is puzzling since the Ashdod work is over thirty years old and has been eclipsed by more recent work at Ashkelon, Ekron, and Gath (was the writer unaware of this?). By contrast, Daniel Peterson's article on the Book of Mormon is logically crafted, well ordered, thematically consistent, and thoroughly referenced with endnotes. In discussing the Book of Mormon's contribution to understanding the "covenants of the Lord, which he hath made unto the house of Israel" (1 Nephi 13:23), Peterson explores the entire scope of Book of Mormon comments on the subject. He, of course, refers back to the Bible and even includes a reference to the Qur'an, which Peterson, associate professor of Islamic studies and Arabic at Brigham Young University, cannot (or does not) resist. In terms of Judah, Peterson demonstrates that the Book of Mormon covenant concept fully recognizes the Jewish people and their unique

position in the house of Israel. He also quotes 2 Nephi 29:4–5, the Lord’s stern condemnation of those Gentiles who persecute and attack Jews. The message is timely. Peterson rescues part 1, making it, as a whole, a strong section of the book.

In part 2, “Signs of the Covenant: Sabbath and Temple,” two Latter-day Saint authors explore the subject matter from both Latter-day Saint and Jewish perspectives. While both are qualified for the task, I wonder why no Jewish perspectives appear from Jews (who are, after all, the ones who can legitimately offer that perspective). Susan Easton Black, professor of church history and doctrine at BYU, competently presents “The Sabbath as a Covenant in Mormonism and Judaism.” Her amply documented chapter samples the spirit of the Jewish Sabbath by quoting from Jewish authors such as coeditor Raphael Jospe and Abraham Joshua Heschel. Her comments on the Sunday Sabbath observed by Latter-day Saints are insightful but short enough (only four pages) that one might be left wanting more. The chapter authored by Andrew Skinner, professor of ancient scripture and dean of Religious Education at BYU, is particularly well written. A scholar familiar with Jewish primary sources (and who can read them in Hebrew), Skinner declares an important concept for Judah to keep in mind: “Latter-day Saints maintain unequivocally that the covenant which the Lord made with Abraham is *their* covenant too” (p. 84).

Noting the Latter-day Saint preoccupation with temples, Skinner also demonstrates “Judaism’s temple-centeredness” (p. 73) with supporting quotations from Rabbi Chaim Richman, one of Israel’s top scholars on the ancient Jewish temple. He then moves on to explore, from both Jewish and Latter-day Saint sources, the blessings of having temples, the despair at losing them for a time, the covenants connected with temples, and even the temple connections of the prophet Elijah, demonstrating (as the chapter title suggests) “The Inextricable Link between Temple, Covenant, and Chosenness in Judaism and Mormonism.”

Part 3, “Covenants: Modern and Post-Modern,” begins with a discussion by Stephen Ricks, “Covenant and Chosenness in the Revelations and Writings of Joseph Smith.” Ricks, professor of Asian and

Near Eastern languages at BYU, contrasts Joseph Smith's very positive view of God's covenant with the house of Israel with the rather gloomy views regarding that covenant in the writings of early nineteenth-century Christian religionists, demonstrating how unique Joseph Smith's concept of the eternal covenant really was. As an example, Ricks describes Joseph's authorization of Orson Hyde to travel to Jerusalem "to dedicate the Holy Land for the return of the Jews" (p. 96). Ricks's treatment of Orson Hyde's prayer of dedication and its implications for the immigration of Jews to the land of Israel could be considered "politically incorrect" in some circles today but is remarkably accurate in terms of historical context and prophecy. He maintains that "The mission of Orson Hyde to dedicate Jerusalem and Palestine for the return of the Jews to their homeland was fulfillment of the covenant promise made to Abraham, renewed with Isaac, and confirmed with Jacob 'that thou wouldst not only give them this land for an everlasting inheritance, but that thou wouldst remember their seed forever,' as Orson Hyde expressed it in his prayer" (p. 100).

In addition to quoting Joseph Smith and Orson Hyde, Ricks quotes Brigham Young when addressing the issue of proselytizing, or rather *not* proselytizing, the Jews of the land of Israel: "Unlike Christian expectations for the return of the Jews, Orson Hyde's prayer for their return to Jerusalem did not include a prayer for affirmative preaching to them there. Brigham Young stated this in a sermon in December 1854—a point reiterated by other leaders of the LDS Church: 'Jerusalem is not to be redeemed by our going there and preaching to the inhabitants. It will be redeemed by the hand of the Almighty'" (p. 99).

In the next chapter, Neil Gillman provides the "post-Modern" part of this section of *Covenant and Chosenness*. A professor of Jewish philosophy at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York City, Gillman skillfully samples diverse twentieth-century Jewish thinkers, from voices Orthodox to Reform, in their search to find meaning in the notion of an ancient covenant in a modern world. His offering is interesting reading, albeit somewhat involved, and only goes astray when the author leaves the realm of Jewish thought to present what he thinks are parallel post-Modern trends in Mormonism. His quotations from

obscure articles in *Dialogue* and *Sunstone* (there are no references to mainstream LDS sources) demonstrate that he is not up to speed in terms of the real forces driving the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints into the twenty-first century. In terms of the American Jewish experience, however, Gillman presents some genuine issues. Whether the vast majority of the Jewish world will come to think of themselves as “post-Modern” is another question (see below, “Do the Math!”).

Part 4, “Covenant and Ultimate Destiny: Particularistic and Universalistic Visions” is a mouthful of a title for the book’s final section. But the last three chapters do in fact address the issue of whether Mormonism and Judaism should expect a “particularist” or “universalist” fulfillment of God’s covenant with Israel—in other words, can Jews and Mormons (and even others) believe and worship differently but still all make it to heaven? Coeditor Truman G. Madsen, emeritus professor of philosophy at BYU, eloquently describes and summarizes the universalist view that the restored gospel presents of the Israelite covenant and all humankind. Pointing out that all citizens of the earth, whether Jews or Gentiles, indeed all nations, kindreds, tongues, and people, are eventually destined to be recognized as gathered Israel in the restored gospel sense—the inheritors of the gospel covenants God made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—Madsen reaches the ultimate universalist conclusion: “Who then is left out? No one. Except those who resolutely and finally choose not to be chosen” (p. 139).

In his chapter entitled “Overcoming Chosenness,” Menachem Kellner, professor of Jewish thought at the University of Haifa, presents another universalist model, but one so radically different from any of his modern Jewish contemporaries that readers may be genuinely startled, Jewish and gentile alike. Citing a passage allegedly suppressed from Maimonides’ *Mishnah Torah*, Kellner suggests that all the peoples of the world will, eventually, become heirs of the Israelite covenant and its blessings, because all the peoples of the world will convert to Judaism incident to the coming of the Messiah! “In the end of days all humans will be Jews” is the scenario predicted by Kellner, “because . . . to become a Jew it is enough to adopt correct beliefs;

halakhic practice and even the identity of one's mother become secondary issues" (p. 157). Christianity and Islam, according to Kellner's interpretation of Maimonides, serve to prepare the way for this mass conversion to Judaism by introducing large segments of the world to the precepts of the Torah (i.e., the Hebrew Bible, or Old Testament). I quickly point out that Kellner is unique in his view—virtually no other Jewish commentator takes the positions he proposes—and other than passages from medieval literature, Kellner largely quotes his own previous works in the endnotes. The message here: Kellner is virtually alone among Jews in his notion that we will all one day be Jewish. Most of his colleagues (see Jospe below, for example) suggest that Jews will retain their unique identity and religion under the Israelite covenant in perpetuity, eternally separate from the gentile nations. But as alone as he is among Jews, the photographic negative of Kellner's model has been at work for centuries among Christians and Muslims, as well as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, all of whom believe that the world will convert to their faith at the end of days.

The third of this trio of chapters, however, takes a more traditional and "particularist" view of the Jewish people as sole inheritors of the ancient covenant God made with Israel, albeit leaving room enough and to spare for the Latter-day Saints as a modern covenant people of God in and of themselves. In "Chosenness in Judaism: Exclusivity vs. Inclusivity," coeditor Raphael Jospe, who is senior lecturer in Jewish philosophy at the Open University of Israel and adjunct professor of Jewish studies at the BYU Jerusalem Center for Near Eastern Studies, maintains that Jews will remain Jews and non-Jews will remain non-Jews in the plan of heaven. *Both* Jews and Gentiles may expect a heavenly reward for their willingness to obey God's commandments, or, as the sages put it, "The righteous of the nations have a portion in the world to come" (p. 179). Gentiles in general have a covenant from God in the form of the seven Noahide commandments. And Latter-day Saints in particular have a specific covenant in their restored gospel. God can covenant with any people, or with all people. And the covenant expectations God has of one nation in any specific

setting or era may or may not be the same as for another nation in another setting or era. But chosen people must exercise caution. “There are Jews today,” Jospe maintains, “who think that chosenness confers upon the Jewish people some spiritual or other superiority over non-Jews” (p. 185). Though he does not say the same of Latter-day Saints, that conclusion applies just as certainly to some of them. This often lends the very concept of chosenness a negative connotation among individuals who are not Latter-day Saints or Jews. However, Jospe suggests “that what is objectionable is not the concept of the Chosen People per se, but rather its externalization”—chosenness, says Jospe, “is a concept properly directed internally rather than externally” (p. 185). Jews and Mormons each have a covenant with God and are chosen peoples in his sight. And if his covenant with one differs from his covenant with the other, are they not both valid in his eyes? “Thus understood,” concludes Jospe, “chosenness and covenant need not imply any triumphalism or superiority” (p. 187).



Do the Math!

The Jewish world is changing rapidly. In 1939 approximately 13 million Jews lived on our planet, the majority of whom were located in eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. More than 6 million of those (nearly half the world’s Jews) were killed in the Holocaust perpetrated by Nazi Germany. It took more than half a century for the Jewish world to rebuild its population to pre-World War II levels, but by the end of the twentieth century it was estimated that the number of Jews had again topped 13 million.² The location of the majority of those Jews, however, and the role that their location plays in religious life, has altered significantly. In the last fifteen years, for

2. The Israeli newspaper *Ha’aretz* reported the current world Jewish population at 13.2 million. Yair Sheleg, “Intermarriage, Low Birth Rates Threaten Diaspora Jewry,” *Ha’aretz*, 13 February 2002 (English Internet edition: www.haaretzdaily.com).

example, over 1 million Jews moved from the former Soviet Union to Israel, while more tens of thousands moved to the United States. Today, the country with the largest Jewish population in the world is the United States of America, with an estimated 6 million Jews (the plurality of world Jewry). The country with the second largest Jewish population is Israel, which, according to its 2002 population count, numbered some 5.3 million Jews as part of its 6.5 million total population.³ Due to slowing Jewish birthrates, demographic models suggest that the world Jewish population will not increase to 14 million until some time between 2030 and 2040. However, continued immigration to Israel and a higher birthrate among Israeli Jews as opposed to non-Israeli Jews will result in more than 7 million of those Jews residing in the Jewish State. Israel will therefore be the home of an absolute majority of the world's Jews before the middle of the twenty-first century. Its population of Jews will also be much younger, on the average, than the Jewish population in America and other parts of the world and will, of course, be a Hebrew-speaking population.⁴

In terms of Jewish religious practice, this math provides a clear message. Prior to the 1800s, only one “type” of Judaism existed—the traditional system that is now called Orthodox Judaism. It was not even called “Orthodox” then because no other types of Judaism existed. Whether the tradition was Ashkenazic or Sephardic, Judaism was Judaism. But the appearance of Reform Judaism in Germany in the 1800s and its subsequent migration to and popularity in the United States resulted in the need to define traditional Judaism by assigning it some type of name, and “Orthodox” became the identifying tag. The 1900s saw the rise in America of a “third way” in Judaism—the Conservative movement, a sort of meeting in the middle for American Jews who were uncomfortable with some of the traditions and practices of the Orthodox but were put off by the radical changes instituted

3. As reported by the Central Bureau of Statistics of the State of Israel in April 2002. Tal Muscal, “Population at 6.5 Million on 54th Independence Day,” *The Jerusalem Post*, 16 April 2002 (Internet edition: www.jpost.com).

4. Sheleg, “Intermarriage, Low Birth Rates.”

by the Reform. Conservative Judaism attracted more American Jews than any other movement during the twentieth century, so that by 2002, nearly 1.1 million (or 18 percent) of America's 6 million Jews affiliated with Conservative synagogues, 960,000 (or 16 percent) affiliated with the Reform movement, and only about 360,000 (just 6 percent) affiliated with Orthodox movements. The Conservative and Reform movements together now claim over 2.1 million American Jews, about 34 percent of the U.S. total. But while the nontraditional movements are trouncing the Orthodox in terms of adherents in the United States, more than half of all American Jews (some 3.5 million) claim no religious affiliation with any of these movements.⁵

The situation in Israel, however, is a different story. For all intents and purposes, Orthodox Judaism is the only recognized Judaism in Israel. In spite of efforts by Reform and Conservative activists to obtain equal recognition for their movements, the religious apparatus of the Jewish state is controlled by the Orthodox. There is no sign of much popular opposition to the Orthodox monopoly over the religious life of Israel's 5.3 million Jews nor any sign that Orthodox control of Israeli Jewish institutions and practices will change in the coming decades. Relatively few Conservative or Reform Jews immigrate to Israel from America—most new American-Israelis are Orthodox. Another factor to consider is that nearly 80 percent of Israeli Jews (some 4 million) participate in their synagogues, to one extent or another, and identify themselves as traditionally adherent. The Jews of Israel who choose to exercise religion are nearly all Orthodox by default. What this means in terms of world Jewry is that the number of Orthodox Jews is double that of the Reform and Conservative combined. Even now, practicing Orthodox Jews in the world outnumber the total of all other movements together, literally by millions. And since the *majority* of *all* the world's Jews are projected to be living in Israel by the year 2040, the numerical gap between the growing Orthodox community in Israel and the smaller American Reform/Conservative

5. Rachel Zoll (A.P.), "Conservative Jews Ponder Future of Religious Moderation," *The Jerusalem Post*, 11 February 2002 (Internet edition: www.jpost.com).

community will continue to grow. The message, relevant for the next book to be reviewed, is simply this: Orthodox Judaism is in first place today and is in first place to stay.

Jews and Mormons: Two Houses of Israel

This is a volume with an inviting title. Written by Frank J. Johnson (a Latter-day Saint) and William J. Leffler (a Reform Jew), its title seems to promise a comparison both of peoples and of their religious traditions. The format—alternating chapters by the two writers on the backgrounds, beliefs, and practices of Judaism and Mormonism—is strong and might have been employed well in *Covenant and Chosenness*. However, the book falls short of informing readers about the real nature and extent of Judaism because of its light treatment of Orthodoxy. The book also fails, in my opinion, to represent the essence and spirit of Latter-day Saint religion because of shortcomings in style and choice of content. The reason for these failures probably lies with the background and scope of experience of the two authors—Leffler is described as a retired Reform rabbi and Johnson is introduced as a convert to Mormonism and a high priest who recently served a year-long mission in Canada with his wife.

On the Jewish side, Rabbi Leffler writes in an intelligent and readable style, presenting a picture of his own type of Judaism that is both interesting and accurate—accurate, that is, in terms of Jews in America. Leffler gives a great deal more weight to the interpretation and practice of “non-traditionalist” Judaism (his combination term for Reform and Conservative) than to “traditionalist” Judaism (which, of course, refers to Orthodoxy). The discussion is transparent and honest, and Leffler does periodically contrast the beliefs and practices of the “traditionalists” with the “non-traditionalists” he clearly favors. But the discussion is not evenhanded. Reform ideas are given much more space than Orthodox ideas, to the point that the reader could easily come away with the impression that Jews in general are primarily non-Orthodox and that Orthodoxy is the much smaller school of Judaism, destined to continue shrinking and

eventually to disappear. In America, of course, this may be true—far more Conservative and Reform Jews than Orthodox live there. But as pointed out above, this is certainly not the case with world Jewry in general, not now and even less so in the future, if trends continue. Orthodox Judaism is far and away dominant in the Jewish world as a whole. But a Latter-day Saint reader could come away from Leffler's chapters with the impression that Leffler's own brand of Judaism represents how most Jews throughout the world operate, especially because Latter-day Saints tend to compare other religions to their own, and LDS doctrine and practices are not as diverse as those of the Jews (there is no "Reform" Mormonism).

Leffler often makes sweeping statements about "modern Jews" that certainly do not apply to all Jews, or even to the majority of Jews, in this modern age. For example:

Modern Jews are not disturbed by the findings of biblical scholars who conclude that the Pentateuch was compiled by different authors and redactors over a period of many centuries and reflect their editing of the events it reports. This approach also permits Judaism to take a situational view of ethical questions, though still maintaining the overarching principle on which they are based. (pp. 3–4)

Even if this can be said to be the case for modern Reform or Conservative Jews, it certainly cannot be said of modern Orthodox Jews, for whom the Pentateuch (or Torah) is the word of God and for whom "situational ethics" is not an acceptable method of religious operation. Although Rabbi Leffler's chapters do not describe much concerning the beliefs and practices of the majority of Jews, namely Orthodox Judaism, I would give them a conditional recommendation for what they are—essentially an adequately written introductory discussion of Reform Judaism.

The discussion of Mormonism, in my opinion, was not as well written. Johnson's treatment suffers on two counts. His description of Latter-day Saint religion was, for my tastes, often tedious and one-dimensional. I found myself turned off by descriptions of church

organization, belief, and practice that, while correct in the technical sense, give the impression of a centrally run bureaucracy of mere conformists rather than the rich assortment of intelligent individuals with whom I regularly associate. If I were a prospective investigator, I would probably avoid a denomination described in such unattractive terms. Johnson's chapters also could have used some judicious editing. They go into far more detail about certain aspects of church history and government than is really necessary to adequately introduce a reader to Latter-day Saint belief and practice. The text is cluttered with hundreds of idiosyncratic references to everything from the nature of reformed Egyptian as "shorthand for Hebrew" to the "living expenses" of General Authorities. Lack of content control makes Johnson's chapters a rambling collection of run-on sentences and ideas that tend to be more confusing than informative.

The chapters on the Church of Jesus Christ also seem to be self-congratulatory, as if the church had been recognized by popular acclamation as the truly truest religion and receptacle of virtue, for example: "Today, Mormons are highly respected and much better understood by most people" (p. 37). Perhaps it can be said that Latter-day Saints are finding more respect in the United States and in some other areas of the world than we used to enjoy, but as a rule are we "highly respected"? In general, no. I regularly deal with people who know nothing at all about Latter-day Saints, or who have only heard stories of polygamy, and for whom I am the only Latter-day Saint they have ever met. We may be coming "out of obscurity," but in world terms we are only barely out and still have a lot of work to do.

Another weakness is that in terms of Jews, Johnson's text tends to be undiplomatic and condescending. (To Rabbi Leffler's credit, he makes no statements about Mormons that could be considered negative.) If I were a Jew reading this book, I would probably be amazed at what Johnson writes about Latter-day Saints but would undoubtedly be insulted by what he writes about Jews. A couple of examples will suffice: "'True' and 'truth' are words that we Latter-day Saints take very seriously and that relate to concepts in which we believe absolutely. In contrast, Jews have great difficulty with these words when applied to

religious concepts and teachings” (p. 23). “Mormons believe in absolute truth, whether it be scriptural, ethical, or moral, and most Jews do not” (p. 23).

I came away from this book thinking that it might be beneficial for Latter-day Saints to read it—it would be helpful if more Mormons understood something of Reform Jews and Judaism in America (if not in Israel). But at the same time I also came away hoping that no Jew would ever read it. The description of Mormonism is, in my opinion, so unattractively presented that I would not want anyone to think it accurately captured the essence, spirit, and revealed truth of my faith. Alas, since the book is published by Ktav, a major Jewish publishing house, the likelihood is that many more Jews will read it than Mormons. Oiy veh!



“We have found the Messiah!”⁶

There is something about the word *messiah* that excites Latter-day Saints. Somehow, just the use of the term *messiah* alongside the familiar anglicized Greek name-title “Christ” lends an air of ancient world authenticity to our conversations about Jesus of Nazareth. By now there cannot be many who have not been taught that the Greek term *christos*, which means “anointed one,” was the initial translation of the Hebrew and Aramaic term *meshiah*, which also means “anointed one,” and from which our anglicized term *messiah* is derived. When speaking of himself, Jesus (and his followers) actually used the term “Messiah” rather than “Christ.” In our own time, to say “Jesus the Messiah” has become as meaningful an expression for some Latter-day Saints as saying “Jesus the Christ.” The acceptability that use of the Jewish term has gained in Latter-day Saint settings is evident in the popular multivolume commentary on the life of Jesus by Elder Bruce R. McConkie, commonly called “the Messiah series”

6. John 1:41 KJV: “Messias” is rendered here as “Messiah.”

(*The Promised Messiah*, *The Mortal Messiah* volumes 1–4, and *The Millennial Messiah*).

The Latter-day Saint concept of messiah, indeed the concept of the Christian world at large, is that there is but one: Jesus the Messiah, whom we more often call Jesus the Christ, or simply Jesus Christ. In the historical development of Judaism, however, there have been expectations of more than a single messiah. As far back as the time of Jesus himself, Jews looked forward to the coming of at least three different messiahs—a “forerunner” messiah of the lineage of Joseph, a “priestly” messiah of the lineage of Aaron, and a “royal” messiah of the lineage of David. (How these differing expectations were dealt with by the New Testament writers in terms of Jesus is a subject for another time.) A consensus has emerged among Jewish thinkers over the centuries that in every generation men arise who could become the promised messiahs, but whether or not God brings them to that point depends on the worthiness of the generation. Every generation of Jews over the last two millennia has prayed daily for the coming of messiah, and as will be seen below, has actually expected that arrival in its day. By the same token, every generation of Latter-day Saints since the restoration began has prepared for the coming of Christ, and every Latter-day Saint since Joseph Smith has probably thought, at one time or another, that during his or her own lifetime he or she would see the Savior’s coming. Jews and Mormons continue to await the messianic arrival with great expectations, as widely different as those expectations are.

I have used the term *messiah* uncapitalized here, somewhat out of normal LDS literary practice, because it is applied above and below to men other than Jesus. In fact, Jesus himself used the term in warning about others who would come after he was gone: “Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is messiah, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false messiahs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect” (Matthew 24:23–24, with *messiah* substituted for *Christ*).

Since Jesus warned of false messiahs, he must surely have known that they would come. But Christian history in general, and Latter-day Saint history in particular, does not report their numbers being fooled by the arising of any false messiahs. False messiahs really haven't appeared in Christian history. Which false messiahs, then, was Jesus speaking of? And who were the "very elect" he said might be deceived? Could they be Jewish, as was he? Could Jesus have been speaking of Jewish men who were thought to be messiahs?

The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights

By far the most intriguing of the three volumes I review here, *The Jewish Messiahs: From the Galilee to Crown Heights* is definitely not your average Mormon fare. The author, Harris Lenowitz, is Jewish, and no Latter-day Saint themes are explored in the book. But Lenowitz, who is professor of Hebrew at the University of Utah Middle East Center, has a long history of interaction with and service to Latter-day Saints, particularly those struggling to learn the Hebrew language at the University of Utah. Arguably the finest Hebraist in the western United States, Lenowitz's genius in numerous languages is supplemented by his able grasp of history, culture, and religion—his scope and ability are impressive.

The Jewish Messiahs explores what is known, or at least some of what is known, of the lives and efforts of more than two dozen Jews over the last two millennia who were deemed by their Jewish followers to be the promised messiah, beginning with the Galilean Jesus of Nazareth and concluding with the end of the twentieth century. It should be significant to Latter-day Saints and other Christian readers that Jesus is the first messiah treated by Lenowitz, who recognizes him as such not only in terms of historical priority, but also in terms of truly Jewish origin: "More has been written about Jesus than about any other Jewish messiah, yet it is quite common to find his Jewishness ignored, particularly by the traditional historians of Christianity. . . . He was a Galilean Jew, of the first century CE, who acted as a messiah and was taken for one" (p. 34).

In telling Jesus' story, Lenowitz employs a minimalist reconstruction of synoptic gospel accounts, of his own making but based on E. P. Sanders's "framework," entirely omitting the record of John. This approach does not result in a negative portrayal, however; he combines selections of Matthew, Mark, and Luke to present a positive and, if not complete, basically authentic and certainly sympathetic picture of Jesus as a messiah figure. One thesis that Lenowitz proposes will certainly resonate with Latter-day Saint readers—the notion that it did not take long for Jesus' teachings and organization to become corrupted after his departure: "Often thought the most successful messianic movement in Judaism, Christianity achieved its power and endurance largely by abandoning the goals and society of Jesus and his disciples following his death" (p. 7).

But this book is not about Jesus alone—he is just the beginning. Jesus is contrasted with Shi'mon bar Kosiba (the famous Bar Kokhba), who also lived in the land of Israel, although he lived a century later than Jesus and was a Judean rather than a Galilean. There come accounts (rendered into English from Hebrew, Yiddish, and other original source languages by Lenowitz himself) of another two dozen Jewish figures who lived in diverse places from Persia to Poland and from Yemen to New York, who arose as teachers and leaders and were either claimed to be or were proclaimed as the promised messiah. While some readers might be tempted to check out this volume just to see what Lenowitz has to say about Jesus, they would certainly come away the poorer if they did not sample several of the other messiah accounts, from Shabtai Zvi to the Ba'al Shem Tov, that Lenowitz offers. Of most recent interest is the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Menachem Mendel Schneerson, of Crown Heights, New York, who was proclaimed King Messiah by many of his followers during his lifetime. The Rebbe Schneerson did not refute the claims prior to his death in June 1994, and even now there is a significant movement within Habad (the acronym-title for the Lubavitcher movement) who believe in him. In fact, a significant number of those followers believe that Rebbe Schneerson will resurrect from the dead to return and reign as the messiah of a redeemed Israel (as some had earlier

believed concerning Shabtai Zvi). I have met and talked with some of these believers myself and find this theme fascinating.

A word of caution is in order, however. This book is not light reading, nor is it devotional in nature. It is scholarly and difficult—literary “heavy lifting,” so to speak. It is also set in a smaller type font than I found comfortable. Not only that, Lenowitz treats the messiahs with a certain aloofness that suggests he is not personally convinced their efforts were for the good of the Jewish people. It is not that he lacks esteem for them, for he certainly seems to admire each one of them as a Jewish individual. But the messianic ideal is one that he concludes has never ended successfully: “The ephemeral worth of such doomed creatures as our messiahs seems, finally, to be unequal to the real suffering endured to bear them” (p. 276).

My own reaction to Lenowitz’s conclusion was that, with the exception of Jesus of Nazareth, he is probably right. But despite his unenthusiastic summary, *The Jewish Messiahs* certainly ranks as the most interesting compilation and treatment of Jewish messianic individuals to appear so far; it easily earns a recommendation as essential reading for those interested in Judah’s longing for the hope of Israel.

MUHAMMAD, JUDAH, AND JOSEPH SMITH:
A SHARP STICK IN THE EYE

Brian M. Hauglid

I don't think any good book is based on factual experience. Bad books are about things the writer already knew before he wrote them.¹

When I was much younger and something bad happened to me, my dad often tried to remind me that things could be worse by saying, "Well, it's better than a sharp stick in the eye." After reading *Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith*, I firmly believe this book is a sharp stick in the eye. I am saying this as a human being who is offended by a very one-sided and inaccurate viewpoint of fellow human beings. Preceding its large-print title is what looks like, but is not, a series title (or subtitle) that reads *Ideologies in Conflict*. I am not exactly sure what this subtitle means, but from the contents of the book, it appears that it refers to two ideological conflicts: Muslims against everyone else and Mormonism above (and better than) everyone else. However, I have enough faith to believe, perhaps somewhat naively, that most will see through this unorganized, uneven, distorted, prejudicial, and, I think,

1. Carlos Fuentes (b. 1928), Mexican novelist, short story writer, quoted in *International Herald Tribune*, Paris, 5 November 1991.

Review of C. Reynolds Mackay. *Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith*. Springville, Utah: Bonneville Books, 2002. xiii + 153 pp., with index. \$12.95.

extremely untrue image of Islam. Furthermore, I believe most will see through the author's polemical attacks against Islam (and sometimes Judaism) done in the name of the restored gospel.

If all you needed to know about this book is that it *is* a bad book then you do not really need to read any further. But if you want to understand *why* it is a bad book and perhaps even learn something about Islam in the process, then read on.

The first major defect of the book is its tendency to overgeneralize and oversimplify complex and multifaceted teachings and practices in Islam. Throughout its short, large-print, and unprofessional-looking chapters, sweeping and unsupported statements are made about Islam that lead one to believe that the book presents a common, everyday Islam. Here are a few examples of actual claims about Islam found in a handy, two-columned chapter entitled "Islam vs. Mormonism": "Polygamy is acceptable" ("Common among Muslims today," p. 86), "Women are inferior to men," "Abortion allowed" (Mackay cites pre-Islamic infanticide as equivalent of late-term abortion, pp. 72–73), "Make war in the name of God," "Divorce is by a statement," "Islam by force," "America is Satanic."

Of course, the other column lists the virtues of Mormonism. For instance, the Islam column reads: "Polygamy is acceptable," whereas the Latter-day Saint column professes: "Polygamy was acceptable only for a brief period. It is an abomination by God and is no longer permitted." Islam column: "Women are inferior to men," LDS column: "Women are equal to men. They are to be loved, educated, cared for, and exalted." Taken as a whole, one could (and probably should, according to the author) likely conclude that the claims in the Islam column are bad and the corresponding claims in the LDS column are good.

I do grant that the statements in the Islam column do point out negative aspects that one can find in Islam. Mackay's interpretations are believed and practiced by *some* Muslims to *one* degree or another; however, this book does not even attempt to show that such practices as divorce, polygamy, and abortion (practically nonexistent) are extremely rare. Nor does it discuss any of the debates taking place within Islam about these issues, particularly about hot topics such as

the status of women, jihad, pluralism, or Muslim relations with the United States. All the book manages to do is bring together all that is negative, bad, sensational, and controversial in Islam in order to create an unreal picture of Islam that resembles nothing so much as a giant Stay Puft Marshmallow Man rampaging through the streets of our cities, terrorizing and threatening our destruction if we do not submit to Islam. And the only solution, according to this book, is to employ Islambusters (Christianity, of course), who will triumph over Islam through converting the evil Muslims.

To me the overall message of this book is quite clear: the author knows just enough about Islam to be extremely dangerous. My fear is that this book will find its way into our church meetings, especially high priest group meetings, to be held up as *the* source for information about Islam. Even worse, I shudder to think how a Muslim would respond to this book, particularly since it comes from a Latter-day Saint. Wouldn't most Muslims likely wonder, "Is this what Mormons think of us?"

Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith makes another major mistake at the outset that is anathema to anyone who knows something about Islam. While the author refers to adherents of Islam as Muslims, he also, and sometimes on the same page (p. 2), frequently calls Muslims "Islams." When I alerted Daniel Peterson to this crass flaw in the book, he declared, "I wish all of us Mormonisms could learn how to properly refer to the Islams and their religion. The same goes for Judaisms and Catholicisms, too."² With this statement I think Dan nailed the problem so that anyone can understand how offensive it would be to Muslims to call them Islams. I am surprised I did not see a statement in the book that "all Islams are A-rabs." Along these lines, we also do not refer to Muslims as "Muhammadans," since Muslims do not worship Muhammad. Members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, of all people, should be sensitive to this kind of labeling since we too have been accused of being Joseph Smith worshippers.

2. Daniel Peterson, e-mail correspondence to the author, 7 November 2002.

I believe Mackay incorrectly interprets some Qurʿanic passages and some hadith statements (sayings of Muhammad or his Companions) to argue that Muhammad started a military holy war during his lifetime to convert all people to Islam and that this armed holy war continues today. Mackay refers to this war as the “Oily Jihad” (pp. 10–11), using the pun, “Oil is fuelling [*sic*] the continuing Jihad against the West,” which implies that the principal motivation behind the current military holy war, if one actually exists, rests on the Muslim possession and use of oil. This blatant oversimplification can only create more animosity in Latter-day Saints toward Muslims. Certainly oil is a factor in the international geopolitical arena, but outside of the oil-producing Muslim countries, such as in Indonesia or Pakistan, oil is not the main issue. From characterizations such as this, I think the author’s biggest fan club will likely come from the minority of people who follow the Usama bin Ladens of this world, rather than the majority of the 1.2 billion Muslims, a majority that is, by the way, much more moderate in their views and certainly do not believe they are in a holy war (i.e., armed struggle) against the West.

To set the record straight, the term *jihad* means “struggle” or “striving,” and most Muslims see jihad in two important ways: the greater jihad and the lesser jihad. According to one Islamic tradition, after the famous Muslim victory at the Battle of Badr, Muhammad is said to have declared, “You have returned from the lesser jihad to the greater jihad.” When asked what the greater jihad was, Muhammad responded, “It is the *jihad* against your passionate souls.”³ Armed struggle in the Qurʿan and in the traditional teachings of Muhammad is not to be lightly entered into—certainly not in an offensive posture and only in self-defense when in imminent physical danger. This is why terrorist leaders work very hard to carefully persuade their followers that they have been put in a position of self-defense. In general, Muslims divide the world into two camps: the Dar al-Harb (the abode of war) and the Dar al-Islam (the abode of peace); however, the abode of war, in most

3. As found in Seyyid Hossein Nasr, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2002), 260, emphasis in original.

cases, is not interpreted as a military, armed war. It is the war against such things as materialism, immorality, exploitation of women, and anything that can tempt a Muslim to forget his God. Therefore, the real holy war for a Muslim is the personal struggle to be the best Muslim possible, to be diligent in practices such as saying prayers, giving alms, and fasting, all of which helps the Muslim to remember his God through his active participation in his religion.

What really irks me about this book is comparing the worst of Islam—using every negative, biased, twisted fact—to the best of Mormonism, pointing out all that is right, good, and true. I often tell my students in classes on Islam and the gospel and on world religions that Islam is not a monolithic religion. It is a multicultural, multifaceted, multidimensional religion. It embraces many races, languages, and geographical areas. The largest population of Muslims is not even in the Middle East, but in Indonesia. Most Arabs are, of course, Muslim, although many Arabs are Christian too, but most Muslims are not Arab. One really cannot pigeonhole Islam any more than one can pigeonhole any religion that has been around for a reasonably long period of time. Islam, like any other religion, has violent extremists. It probably has more than most other religions since Muslims number one-fifth of the world's population. However, the majority of Muslims are peace-loving, law-abiding people who go to school, work, and care deeply about their families. I tell my students that the Muslims I know are very offended at the extreme behavior of a few loud, violent radicals who put forth their views as orthodox, common Islam.

Most Muslims do not want Islam to be defined by an Usama bin Laden any more than most Christians would want Christianity defined by a David Koresh, or any more than a Latter-day Saint would want Mormonism defined by a Tom Green or a Mark Hofmann. Unfortunately, this book focuses heavily on extremist viewpoints such as are available in a tabloid but does not give any explanation or analysis to the majority moderate view in Islam. In my opinion, this fatal flaw propels the book into an irredeemable abyss.

I will offer a few more excerpts of actual quotations and phrases from the book (some accompanied by my commentary) that I think should ward off the serious-minded inquirer after the truth.

“Islam has always shown hatred of atheists, pagans, Hindus, Sikhs, Zoroastrians, Jews, Buddhists, and Christians, *despite some parts of the Koran which plead for tolerance*” (p. xii, emphasis in original). This overgeneralized statement is simply not true. Islamic history attests that Muslims have at many times lived alongside people of other faiths in peace. Between the eighth and the tenth centuries, for example, when the Muslim empire stretched from Spain to India, not only did Muslims and non-Muslims from many cultures live together, but major Islamic contributions were made in fields such as science, mathematics, literature, philosophy, and linguistics. From the period of Muhammad, Muslims are also under Qur’anic injunction to view and treat Jews and Christians as kindred spirits, or “People of the Book” (*ahl al-kitab*), because they had been caretakers of the scriptures up to the time of the revelation of the Qur’an.

“Most American Muslims love the United States’ economy, and they try to enjoy the American Dream. Their religion doesn’t prevent them from doing all they can to acquire vast wealth, much like the Sikhs in Arabia” (p. xiii). How is this characterization of American Muslims as money-grubbers any different from the anti-Semitism exhibited during the Middle Ages in Europe against the Jews? Modern history has recorded the sad end of such blatantly ignorant and prejudicial views. And since when did the Sikhs move from the Punjab in northwest India to Arabia? I somehow missed that one.

You may also be interested to know that Muhammad “acquired a Harem of a dozen wives and concubines” (p. 1) and is billed (the author refers to John Keegan for this but does not provide a citation) as a “man of violence. He bore arms, was wounded in battle, and preached holy war, or Jihad, against those who defied the will of God as revealed to him, Muhammad. He said, ‘The sword is the key to heaven and hell.’ This is the opposite of Christ’s admonition, who said, ‘He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword’” (p. 3). I was not aware that Muhammad had so many wives (I think he had seven

or eight) and that this was called a *harem*, a term not used until the ninth or tenth century. Mackay's description of Muhammad's character harks back to the polemical eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when Muhammad was also proffered as an evil charlatan subject to epileptic fits and hallucinations. Recent scholarship has seen through the polemics and has since produced much more balanced studies on the life of Muhammad; most have concluded that Muhammad was, at least in part, a product of his times and sincere in his efforts to spread his message.

"In addition to praying three times a day in a prostrate position, the religion of Islam governs many aspects of living" (p. 8). Wrong again! Muslims pray five times a day. Yes, Muslims do bow and prostrate themselves before God to indicate humility and submission. Prayer is basic to the religion and is one of the Five Pillars of Islam (not even mentioned in the book), which are considered mandatory for all Muslims, along with the Shahada, or witness (to become a Muslim the following is recited: "There is no god but God and Muhammad is the Messenger of God"), fasting (month of Ramadan), alms, and the pilgrimage (hajj) to Mecca. It is too bad these Five Pillars didn't receive any attention. This omission is only one example of a number of many basic things the author could have explored and discussed. Truly this book would have been much improved had it dealt with the basic history, beliefs, and practices of Muslims instead of its constant harping on the extremists' points of view.

"Muslims believe the Koran to be the word of God as given to Muhammad. Jews believe the Torah to be the word of God. Mormons believe the Bible is the word of God as long as it is translated correctly" (p. 28). Here is another unfortunate oversimplification, especially since the author says virtually nothing else about the Qur'an outside of the quotations used to emphasize his points throughout the book (except in the chapter with columns, mentioned earlier, which reads, "The Koran is incongruous and full of fallacies" [p. 134]). Of course, any first-year student of Islam knows you really cannot lump the Qur'an, Torah, and Bible together without creating some major misconceptions and misunderstandings. It should be understood

first and foremost that the Qur'an is to the Muslims as Jesus is to the Christians. That is, Muslims consider the Qur'an to be the Word of God and the literal words of God. Muslims do not believe the Qur'an was translated, compiled, or edited. It was revealed to Muhammad in Arabic as if the words came directly from God's mouth. This is why Muslims love to hear the Qur'an recited in Arabic and why Muslims do not, properly speaking, view it as the Qur'an when it has been translated into any other language. Hence, many Muslims in non-Arabic speaking areas learn how to pronounce the Arabic in the Qur'an using transliterated characters from their own tongue. For example, for an English-speaking Muslim to say the *bismallah* (a phrase at the beginning of all but one chapter of the Qur'an), it could be transliterated in English to read (and say) *bismallah al-rahman al-rahim* ("In the name of God, Most Merciful, Most Compassionate"). In this way the English-speaking Muslim could pronounce the actual words of God without even knowing Arabic.

Alongside the appallingly inaccurate portrayal of Islam, the author seeks to extol the virtues of Mormonism by citing all sorts of bizarre comparisons and other topics that seem to have little or nothing to do with anything. What follows are some examples of chapter titles (in quotation marks) and subtitles (in italics): "Homosexuality and Immorality," *AIDS and Immorality*, "Food and Fantasies," *Masturbation, Slavery and Equality*, "Creation and Evolution," *Abraham and the Urim and Thummim*, and *Jews Don't Believe in Unisex*. Many quotations throughout the text are from the Qur'an or the Torah or are outdated or extreme views of lesser-known scholars, with little explanation or synthesis. For instance, the section titled *Jews Don't Believe in Unisex* features Deuteronomy 22:5 with absolutely no discussion of what it really means within the context of the message of the chapter. Yet the discussions on points of Mormonism fill many more pages. And the underlying message of the sections on the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is that Mormonism is better than all other religions, especially Islam.

Mackay's use, or nonuse, of sources contained in the bibliography is very disappointing. Unfortunately, the author never gives a page

reference to his secondary sources. He even includes a few noted scholars (W. Montgomery Watt, Gustave von Grunebaum, Alfred Guillaume, etc.) in his bibliography but does not cite or use their work in the book, which indicates that he either did not read them or purposely left them out because they do not square with his views of Islam. He also lists Daniel Peterson's *Abraham Divided* and Spencer Palmer's *Mormons and Muslims* in the bibliography, but again he does not refer to them in the book.

For the serious Latter-day Saint who wants to know more about Islam and perhaps even compare Islam with Mormonism, this book is definitely not the source. Instead, I would suggest the following: James A. Toronto, "Islam," in *Religions of the World*;⁴ the articles in Spencer Palmer's updated *Mormons and Muslims*;⁵ and Daniel Peterson's *Abraham Divided*.⁶ More recently an entire issue of *BYU Studies* was devoted to the study of Islam.⁷ The *Ensign* as well has published several good articles on Islam or Islamic topics.⁸ A very good non-Latter-day Saint text used for the class on Islam and the gospel at Brigham Young University is Fred Denny's *An Introduction to Islam*.⁹ Anyone who takes a look at any of these publications will quickly identify appropriate ways in which to discuss Islam or any other religion, for that matter. Even the worst of these publications is better than *Muhammad, Judah, and Joseph Smith*, a sharp stick in the eye.

4. Spencer J. Palmer, Roger R. Keller, Dong Sull Choi, and James A. Toronto, *Religions of the World: A Latter-day Saint View*, rev. and enl. ed. (Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University Press, 1997), 213–41.

5. Spencer J. Palmer, ed., *Mormons and Muslims: Spiritual Foundations and Modern Manifestations*, updated and rev. (Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2002).

6. Daniel C. Peterson, *Abraham Divided: An LDS Perspective on the Middle East*, rev. ed. (Salt Lake City: Aspen Books, 1995).

7. *BYU Studies* 40/4 (2001).

8. See James B. Mayfield, "Ishmael, Our Brother," *Ensign*, June 1979, 24–32; Joseph B. Platt, "Our Oasis of Faith," *Ensign*, April 1988, 39–41; James A. Toronto, "A Latter-day Saint Perspective on Muhammad," *Ensign*, August 2000, 50–58; Orin D. Parker, "A Life among Muslims," *Ensign*, March 2002, 50–52.

9. Frederick M. Denny, *An Introduction to Islam*, 2nd ed. (New York: Macmillan, 1994).

SCRIPTURES FOR FAMILIES

Rebecca M. Flinders and Anne B. Fairchild

As mothers of several children each, ranging in age from newborn to twenty-one, we found *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families* and *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families* to be wonderful resources in our family scripture study. As stated in the introduction of one of the books, “The purpose of [these books] is not to offer a rewriting of the [scriptures] in more modern language. The text [of the scriptures] has not been changed. The illustrations and the reading and understanding helps are designed to complement and not replace the official LDS edition of th[ese] sacred work[s]. The intent of th[ese] volume[s] is to help Latter-day Saints, and especially young readers, develop a lifelong love for the [scriptures]” (*Book of Mormon*, p. ix). The compilers and editors of these books did a superb job in producing books with the capacity to meet this goal. The many supplementary helps provide the opportunity for a rich and rewarding

Review of Thomas R. Valletta, gen. ed. *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1999. xiv + 672 pp., with glossary and bibliography. \$49.95.

Review of Thomas R. Valletta, gen. ed. *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families*. Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1998. xi + 500 pp., with glossary, pronunciation guide, and bibliography. \$39.95.

scripture study experience that enables family members, both young and old, to gain a greater understanding of and love for the scriptures.

These books contain resources that are helpful when reading scriptures with younger children (approximately ages two to ten years). Book and chapter headings differ from those included in the official Latter-day Saint scriptures, but they still include an overview of the selection that follows. Often these headings include “suggestions of important things to look for to give purpose to family members’ reading” (*Book of Mormon*, p. x). Parents can use the headings to provide an overview of the chapter or book in easy-to-understand language for their younger children. The suggestions of things to look for provide something for younger children to focus on as they read or listen.

A valuable feature is the topic headings printed in red, which subdivide each chapter and include an average of five to seven verses. Parents can use the topic headings to break up the chapters into smaller, yet still cohesive, sections when an entire chapter is too long for very young children to sit through. The headings also give parents a topical reference that is beneficial when restating and explaining the scriptures to their young children.

The two volumes include many paintings and drawings that depict scenes or characters from the scripture stories. Many photographs of places, people, and artifacts shed further light on the topics covered in the text. In addition, various maps augment the text. All these tools help capture the reader’s interest. The high occurrence of illustrations, maps, and photographs—included on almost every other page—helps to keep the reader focused, and these visual aids are very appealing, especially for young children. Based on our experience, children as young as two years old anticipate and look excitedly for the next picture. These illustrations create an interest in the scripture stories, help explain those stories, and draw the children into the scriptures for further information.

Many of the difficult words in the text are colored blue, indicating that a definition or explanation of that word is provided at the bottom of the page. The definitions are valuable when parents explain the scriptures to young children. Older children (ten and above) and

adults also benefit from these definitions. A few words that are even more complex, such as *covenant*, are colored pink, which indicates that they are explained in even more detail in the glossary at the back of the books.

In addition to the resources mentioned earlier, many other valuable tools are particularly useful for older children and adults. Verse numbers highlighted in red refer the reader to the bottom of the page where three symbols are used to indicate that further insight and a more in-depth explanation of the scripture verse is given. One symbol, a picture of a sun, indicates that modern-day scriptures and quotations from latter-day prophets are used to shed light on the scriptures. The magnifying glass symbol indicates that information is provided “about the meaning of a verse or about the history, the people, or the customs that make the verse interesting” (*Book of Mormon*, p. xi). Some cross-references to scripture stories with similar themes are also given next to the magnifying glass symbol. Next to the third symbol, a question mark, thoughts and questions for pondering or for further discussion are given. All these resources assist families and individuals in having a richer scripture-reading experience. These tools are extremely helpful, especially in books that are difficult to understand, such as 2 Nephi and Revelation.

The previously mentioned red topic headings are also useful for older children and adults in dividing the scriptures into sections that indicate where stories or situations begin and end. This is beneficial because it helps parents more easily lead discussions about the different sections of the chapter, especially in the New Testament when one chapter can cover many different events.

As in the official Latter-day Saint edition of the Book of Mormon, *The Book of Mormon for Latter-day Saint Families* includes the testimonies of the Three and the Eight Witnesses and of the Prophet Joseph Smith. In addition, it includes an introduction, written partly to the young reader and partly to the parents. The introduction explains the various helps that are provided and how they are indicated in the text. It also explains the purpose of the book and how it was intended to be used. An overview of the Book of Mormon describes

the main stories and people, the various sources of the stories, and the main purposes (given with scriptural references) of the Book of Mormon. The introduction and overview provide useful background information for the readers of this book. Having references to the Joseph Smith Translations given at the bottom of each page in *The New Testament for Latter-day Saint Families* is convenient.

One flaw is that the binding is not durable. After six months of reading nightly with the family, a signature from one of the books fell out. This issue is one that needs to be addressed in future printings.

When these books are used side-by-side with the official Latter-day Saint version of the scriptures, their full value becomes obvious. On their own, the lack of cross-references and indexes included in the regular scriptures can be frustrating. Some cross-references are included in the helps at the bottom of the page, but they are limited. Using these books in conjunction with another set of scriptures gives the family reader a full set of resources with which to study the scriptures.

Overall we were very impressed with these Book of Mormon and New Testament books designed for Latter-day Saint families. The many resources that were compiled and included in these books allow readers of all ages to acquire a “lifelong love for the [scriptures].” They are a valuable addition to the Latter-day Saint family library but are, needless to say, not a substitute for the scriptures themselves.

BOOK NOTES

Eric A. Eliason, ed. *Mormons and Mormonism: An Introduction to an American World Religion*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2001. ix + 250 pp., with index. \$17.95 (paperback); \$39.95 (hardback).

This collection of eleven Mormon studies makes available to the Saints the work of such scholars as Nathan O. Hatch, Richard T. Hughes, and Rodney Stark, each well known for his work on American religion and its history. Eliason has augmented these papers with some of the better work by Latter-day Saints and others. However, only a few of the essays have been revised or updated for this volume. It is noteworthy that Eliason has reprinted a portion of Terryl L. Givens, *The Viper on the Hearth: Mormons, Myths, and the Construction of Heresy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 76–93. This remarkable book—a major study in anti-Mormon rhetoric—was not widely known by Latter-day Saints until the publication in 2002 by Oxford University Press of Givens’s *By the Hand of Mormon: The American Scripture That Launched a New World Religion*. The other essays are much better known to Latter-day Saint scholars. Eliason’s introduction to this volume constitutes a well-documented, candid overview of the range of topics covered in this anthology.

Irving Hexham. *Pocket Dictionary of New Religious Movements.* Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2001. 120 pp. \$6.99.

Irving Hexham, a professor of religion at the University of Calgary, provides brief definitions or descriptions of over four hundred “groups, individuals and ideas” associated in some way with what are now being called “new religious movements.” Hexham has provided a useful little reference tool that covers a host of exotic topics and individuals. One finds several entries on items of interest to Latter-day Saints, including “Joseph Smith,” “Mormons,” “cult,” “cult apologist,” “countercult,” “Christian Research Institute,” and “Martin, Walter (1928–1989).” Hexham does not entirely shy away from difficult issues. For example, he indicates that “Dr.” Martin “shaped popular Christian attitudes to contemporary religions” but that he “had a penchant for ad hominem arguments.” The information in the *Pocket Dictionary* seems to be both nonpolemical and generally accurate. Hexham maintains an interesting Web page, found at www.ucalgary.ca/~hexham/ as recently as 17 March 2003. In addition to his interest in the contemporary array of different and competing religious movements, he manifests his own piety in a series of Christian travel guides, published by Zondervan, to such places as Great Britain, Italy, Germany, and France.

Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed. *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures.* Provo, Utah: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2001. ix + 248 pp. \$29.95.

On 8–9 February 1996, a conference on historical authenticity, the scriptures, and the faith of the Saints, organized by Paul Y. Hoskisson, was held at Brigham Young University. This volume, edited by Hoskisson, contains a selection of many, but not all, of the papers read at this conference. Some have been revised or heavily edited. A previously published address (delivered on 29 October 1993 at the annual dinner of the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies) by Elder Dallin H. Oaks has been included in this collection

of essays, as has an essay by James E. Faulconer. This volume contains the introductory remarks made at the conference by Elder Alexander B. Morrison, as well as essays related in various ways to the general topic by John Gee and Stephen D. Ricks, Hoskisson, Kent P. Jackson, Robert J. Matthews, Louis C. Midgley, Robert L. Millett, Daniel C. Peterson, and John S. Tanner. The volume has no index.

Andrew Newberg, Eugene d'Aquili, and Vince Rause. *Why God Won't Go Away: Brain Science and the Biology of Belief*. New York: Ballantine Books, 2002. 234 pp., with references and index. \$14.00.

This is a popularized version of d'Aquili and Newberg's *The Mystical Mind: Probing the Biology of Religious Experience* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1999). Dr. d'Aquili, a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Pennsylvania, passed away in 1998 before this book was completed. Rause is a journalist, and Newberg is an M.D. working in the Department of Radiology in the Division of Nuclear Medicine at the University of Pennsylvania, where he also teaches Religious Studies. The thesis is that meditation is a voyage inward in which the conscious mind is blotted out in an effort to connect with a deep part of ourselves. The result is neurotheology (or the neurobiology of mystical experience). The argument is that rhythmic stimulation yields mystical union with something they define as "God" in the interior of self-consciousness. The authors build on Evelyn Underhill's classic *Mysticism* (first edition, 1911, later much revised) by providing what they describe as "natural causes for 'supernatural' events" (p. 99). Mystical experiences are not thereby treated as mere illusions; they are, instead, understood as neurological events generated by various exercises crafted by mystics to produce those experiences and thereby resolve tensions in the life of the mystic. The point of meditative exercises, according to d'Aquili and Newberg, is to satisfy the need to reduce an otherwise intolerable anxiety generated by the experience of opposites in life. The result of such self-induced neurological brain patterns is a kind of "experience" of "union," as the brain makes the conscious mind, of an inner

“transcendence” over the exterior world. This “neurotheology” is used to account for the origins of all religion, ritual, and myth. Such an explanation is, of course, reductionist.

Joy M. Osborn. *The Book of Mormon—The Stick of Joseph: Evidences That Prove the Book of Mormon to Be a True Record of a Remnant of Joseph*, 2nd ed. Salt Lake City: Ensign Publishing, 2000. 287 pp., with bibliography. \$17.95.

In forty-three brief chapters, Joy Osborn discusses a wide array of topics related to the origin, purposes, claims, and evidences of the Book of Mormon. Her work offers a summary for persons new to the study of this scripture and affords a review for the more informed reader. It may also point the way for further in-depth study. Topics in part 1 include the patriarch Joseph and his importance in understanding the Book of Mormon, the scattering and gathering of Israel, Joseph Smith and the origins of the book, apostasy and restoration, biblical relationships, and the Book of Mormon as a second witness for Christ. Part 2 offers a concise review of many evidences for the book, including those well established and others of interest but more speculative. Among the topics are Nephite record keeping, the relevance of the Popol Vuh and other records, temples, fortresses and types of construction in ancient America, migrations, the mission of Columbus, and ancient Christian influence. A minimal bibliography is included.

LaMar Petersen. *The Creation of the Book of Mormon: A Historical Inquiry*. Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press, 1998 (hardback); 2000 (paperback). xxvi + 259 pp., with selected bibliography, appendix, and index. \$16.95 (hardback); \$15.95 (paperback).

In this book, LaMar Petersen deals with the Book of Mormon by offering a pedestrian, essentially anti-Mormon account of the early visions of Joseph Smith, the use of seer stones in its recovery, the witnesses to the plates, and so forth. His survey of arguments for and against the Book of Mormon is perfunctory. Hence, one will not find

a careful historical examination of the arguments for and against the truth of the Book of Mormon, though this is exactly what is promised. An appendix entitled “Book of Mormon Archaeological Tests” is an edited version of chapter 5 of Stan Larson’s *Quest for the Golden Plates: Thomas Stuart Ferguson’s Search for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Freethinker Press/Smith Associates, 1996), 175–234. Larson (pp. 169–230) attempts to argue that the presumed defection from the faith of Ferguson, an amateur archaeologist, somehow settles the question of archaeology and the Book of Mormon. Petersen was either unaware of recent scholarship or he dealt with it superficially.

John Sillito and Susan Staker, eds. *Mormon Mavericks: Essays on Dissenters*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002. xi + 376 pp. \$21.95.

This is a collection of essays lionizing former Latter-day Saints, dissidents, and cultural Mormons. The editors characterize the so-called “mavericks” they celebrate as “a small part of the larger story of Mormonism” (p. ix). They turn rebellious types into heroes by seeing them—presumably unlike faithful Saints—as “motivated by the desire to promote truth in the face of falsehood” (p. x). The dissenters, apostates, and rebels include James Strang, T. B. H. and Fanny Stenhouse, Amasa Lyman, and Samuel Woolley Taylor. Of the thirteen essays in this anthology, only two are published here for the first time. One of these—Brigham D. Madsen’s panegyric for Sterling McMurrin—is not genuinely original, since it is heavily dependent on the published work of L. Jackson Newell and others. The one genuinely new and significant contribution, if one can get past the silly title, is Lavina Fielding Anderson’s “DNA Mormon: D. Michael Quinn” (pp. 329–63). Anderson at least partially demythologizes Quinn by removing portions of the veil he has constructed to hide, even from himself—she reluctantly grants—the real reasons for his excommunication. She has managed to draw, from materials Quinn provided her, a sympathetic and somewhat more accurate and less heroic picture of his eccentricities than has previously been publicly available (pp. 347–55). Quinn

has found peace, she claims, “despite those who have wronged him in sometimes mean-spirited and bullying ways” (p. 360). Like some of the other authors of the essays reprinted in this volume, Anderson is herself no stranger to operating outside the mainstream of the faith and fellowship of the Saints. This volume has no index.

Lucy Mack Smith. *Lucy’s Book: A Critical Edition of Lucy Mack Smith’s Family Memoir*, edited by Lavina Fielding Anderson, introduction by Irene M. Bates. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2001. ix + 947 pp., with biographical summaries, bibliography, and index. \$44.95.

The memoir of Lucy Mack Smith, mother of Joseph Smith the prophet, is an important primary source for much of the history of Joseph and the Smith family. Many details are given that are not found elsewhere. Written in Nauvoo after the martyrdom of Joseph and his brother Hyrum in 1844, Lucy’s history was first published by Orson Pratt at Liverpool in 1853. It has since had a complicated publishing history, with substantial editing and revision at times. The present editor, Lavina Fielding Anderson, has included a detailed account of the textual history of the book, both in its initial preparation and in past efforts to publish it. She has also provided many annotations throughout, as well as an introduction on “The Domestic Spirituality of Lucy Mack Smith.” Irene M. Bates has contributed an introductory essay to help place Lucy’s work in historical perspective. A section in the back gives biographical summaries of individuals named in the book. This new publication of Lucy’s history is the most complete and accurate edition now available for study and scholarly use.

***To All the World: The Book of Mormon Articles from the Encyclopedia of Mormonism*. Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000. xvii + 343 pp., with index of passages. \$15.95.**

Following the landmark publication by Macmillan of the four-volume *Encyclopedia of Mormonism* in 1992, Daniel H. Ludlow, S. Kent

Brown, and John W. Welch selected over 150 articles about “the contents, peoples, teachings, and coming forth of the Book of Mormon” (p. vii). These concise articles bring into one volume material dealing with the Book of Mormon in an accessible, large-paperback format. Many articles contain a bibliography, and some additional sources have been included in this edition. The statements and opinions of this book do not represent the official position of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints but are intended to “serve as a valuable introduction to the Book of Mormon, leading readers into its pages and especially into its covenantal testament of and with the Savior Jesus Christ” (p. vii).

Chris Tolworthy. *The Bible Says 1830*, 2nd ed. Lincoln, Nebr.: Writers Club, 2002. v + 116 pp., with appendixes. \$11.95.

This small volume reviews matters of biblical chronology and prophecy and looks forward to the last days and the establishment of the kingdom of God as prophesied in the book of Daniel. Tolworthy reviews past efforts to determine the chronology, and he attempts to show the significance of the year 1830 as a pivotal time anticipated by Bible prophecy. Corresponding with the establishment of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and the restoration of scripture and the fulness of the gospel, the year 1830 is seen not only as a time when such prophecy was fulfilled, but also as a religious turning point with the climax of the Second Great Awakening. Additionally, the year marks the establishment of railways, a development that “sparked economic, political, philosophical, theological and technological revolutions that are still taking place” (p. 46). Appendixes treat the message of the gospel, additional discussion of Daniel’s prophecy, and the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. A bibliography is not included, but the study has many footnotes, usually cited with sufficient completeness that a bibliography could be developed.

Bryan Waterman, ed. *The Prophet Puzzle: Interpretive Essays on Joseph Smith*. Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999. xiii + 352 pp. \$18.95.

The editor of these fifteen essays dealing with Joseph Smith published over the past three decades grants that, “for believing Mormons, Smith’s revelations and translations are best understood literally” (p. xi). He then boasts that “many of the essays collected” in this volume treat the Book of Mormon and other special divine revelations as mere windows into Joseph Smith’s own mind (p. xi)—that is, as explicit attempts to explain away his truth claims. Examples include the efforts of Richard D. Anderson, Lawrence Foster, and Gary Bergera to follow in the footsteps of Fawn Brodie’s effort to psychoanalyze Joseph Smith. Three of the essays included in this anthology are published here for the first time. “Joseph Smith as Translator,” by Richard Bushman, is the most significant. This collection, however, is problematic. For example, Jan Shipps publicly repudiated her essay entitled “The Prophet Puzzle” (originally published in 1974) at the Mormon History Association meetings held at Snowbird, Utah, in May 1996, when she commented on Dan Vogel’s effort to explain away Joseph Smith’s prophetic truth claims. Her essay is, like all of the others reprinted in this anthology, given without revision or updating of any kind. This volume has no index.

INDEX

FARMS Review of Books, 2002

By Author

The entries in this section are listed by author, title, reviewer (in parentheses), volume number, and beginning page number.

Anderson, Robert D., *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon* (Michael D. Jibson), 14/1–2:223.

Aston, Duane R., *Return to Cumorah: Piecing Together the Puzzle Where the Nephites Lived* (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.

Bassett, K. Douglas, comp., *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Insights from Prophets, Church Leaders, and Scholars* (Ronald W. Asay), 14/1–2:1.

Beckwith, Francis J., ed., *The New Mormon Challenge* (David L. Paulsen), 14/1–2:99.

Blomberg, Craig L., “Is Mormonism Christian?” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 315–32 (Benjamin I. Huff), 14/1–2:113; (Kent P. Jackson), 14/1–2:131.

Cannon, George Q., *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet* (Davis Bitton), 14/1–2:275.

Drosnin, Michael, *The Bible Code* (John A. Tvedtnes), 14/1–2:329.

- Hallwas, John E., ed., *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois* (Glen M. Cooper), 14/1–2:295.
- Hedengren, Paul, *The Land of Lehi: Further Evidence for the Book of Mormon* (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.
- Holding, James Patrick, *The Mormon Defenders: How Latter-day Saint Apologists Misinterpret the Bible* (Russell C. McGregor), 14/1–2: 315.
- Hopkins, Richard R., *Biblical Mormonism: Responding to Evangelical Criticism of LDS Theology* (Stephen D. Ricks), 14/1–2:337.
- Kagel, Brian, *The Lord's University: Freedom and Authority at BYU* (Ralph C. Hancock), 14/1–2:321.
- Launius, Roger D., ed., *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois* (Glen M. Cooper), 14/1–2:295.
- Lutes, Kenneth, *Words of Christ Restored for the Last Days* (John A. Tvedtnes), 14/1–2:79.
- Lutes, Lyndell, *Words of Christ Restored for the Last Days* (John A. Tvedtnes), 14/1–2:79.
- Mosser, Carl, "And the Saints Go Marching On," in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 58–88 (Louis Midgley), 14/1–2:139.
- Mosser, Carl, ed., *The New Mormon Challenge* (David L. Paulsen), 14/1–2:99.
- Olive, Phyllis Carol, *The Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon* (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.
- Ostling, Joan K., *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (Louis Midgley), 14/1–2:139.
- Ostling, Richard N., *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise* (Louis Midgley), 14/1–2:139.
- Owen, Paul, "Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness," in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 301–8 (Kevin Christensen), 14/1–2:193.

- Owen, Paul, ed., *The New Mormon Challenge* (David L. Paulsen), 14/1–2:99.
- Pinnock, Hugh W., *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon* (Richard Dilworth Rust), 14/1–2:83.
- Thorne, Melvin J., ed., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s* (Stephen J. Duffin), 14/1–2:91.
- Van Wagoner, Richard S., *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess* (Howard K. Harper, Steven C. Harper, and David P. Harper), 14/1–2:261.
- Waterman, Bryan, *The Lord's University: Freedom and Authority at BYU* (Ralph C. Hancock), 14/1–2:321.
- Welch, John W., ed., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s* (Stephen J. Duffin), 14/1–2:91.

By Title

The entries in this section are listed by title, author, reviewer (in parentheses), volume number, and beginning page number.

“And the Saints Go Marching On,” by Carl Mosser, in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 59–88 (Louis Midgley), 14/1–2:139.

The Bible Code, by Michael Drosnin (John A. Tvedtnes), 14/1–2:329.

Biblical Mormonism: Responding to Evangelical Criticism of LDS Theology, by Richard R. Hopkins (Stephen D. Ricks), 14/1–2:337.

Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois, edited by John E. Hallwas and Roger D. Launius (Glen M. Cooper), 14/1–2:295.

Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon, by Hugh W. Pinnock (Richard Dilworth Rust), 14/1–2:83.

Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon, by Robert D. Anderson (Michael D. Jibson), 14/1–2:223.

“Is Mormonism Christian?” by Craig L. Blomberg, in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 315–32 (Benjamin I. Huff), 14/1–2:113; (Kent P. Jackson), 14/1–2:131.

The Land of Lehi: Further Evidence for the Book of Mormon, by Paul Hedengren (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.

Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Insights from Prophets, Church Leaders, and Scholars, compiled by K. Douglas Bassett (Ronald W. Asay), 14/1–2:1.

- Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, by George Q. Cannon (Davis Bitton), 14/1–2:275.
- The Lord's University: Freedom and Authority at BYU*, by Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel (Ralph C. Hancock), 14/1–2:321.
- The Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*, by Phyllis Carol Olive (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.
- Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*, by Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling (Louis Midgley), 14/1–2:139.
- The Mormon Defenders: How Latter-day Saint Apologists Misinterpret the Bible*, by James Patrick Holding (Russell C. McGregor), 14/1–2:315.
- “Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness,” by Paul Owen, in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 301–8 (Kevin Christensen), 14/1–2:193.
- The New Mormon Challenge*, edited by Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen (David L. Paulsen), 14/1–2:99.
- Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, edited by John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne (Stephen J. Duffin), 14/1–2:91.
- Return to Cumorah: Piecing Together the Puzzle Where the Nephites Lived*, by Duane R. Aston (John E. Clark), 14/1–2:9.
- Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, by Richard S. Van Wagoner (Howard K. Harper, Steven C. Harper, and David P. Harper), 14/1–2:261.
- Words of Christ Restored for the Last Days*, by Kenneth Lutes and Lyndell Lutes (John A. Tvedtnes), 14/1–2:79.

By Reviewer

The entries in this section are listed by reviewer, author, title, volume number, and beginning page number.

Asay, Ronald W., review of K. Douglas Bassett, comp., *Latter-day Commentary on the Book of Mormon: Insights from Prophets, Church Leaders, and Scholars*, 14/1–2:1.

Bitton, Davis, review of George Q. Cannon, *Life of Joseph Smith the Prophet*, 14/1–2:275.

Christensen, Kevin, review of Paul Owen, “Monotheism, Mormonism, and the New Testament Witness,” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 301–8, 14/1–2:193.

Clark, John E., review of Duane R. Aston, *Return to Cumorah: Piecing Together the Puzzle Where the Nephites Lived*, 14/1–2:9.

Clark, John E., review of Paul Hedengren, *The Land of Lehi: Further Evidence for the Book of Mormon*, 14/1–2:9.

Clark, John E., review of Phyllis Carol Olive, *The Lost Lands of the Book of Mormon*, 14/1–2:9.

Cooper, Glen M., review of John E. Hallwas and Roger D. Launius, eds., *Cultures in Conflict: A Documentary History of the Mormon War in Illinois*, 14/1–2:295.

Duffin, Stephen J., review of John W. Welch and Melvin J. Thorne, eds., *Pressing Forward with the Book of Mormon: The FARMS Updates of the 1990s*, 14/1–2:91.

Hancock, Ralph C., review of Bryan Waterman and Brian Kagel, *The Lord’s University: Freedom and Authority at BYU*, 14/1–2:321.

- Harper, David P., review of Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, 14/1–2:261.
- Harper, Howard K., review of Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, 14/1–2:261.
- Harper, Steven C., review of Richard S. Van Wagoner, *Sidney Rigdon: A Portrait of Religious Excess*, 14/1–2:261.
- Huff, Benjamin I., review of Craig L. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 315–32, 14/1–2:113.
- Jackson, Kent P., review of Craig L. Blomberg, “Is Mormonism Christian?” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 315–32, 14/1–2:131.
- Jibson, Michael D., review of Robert D. Anderson, *Inside the Mind of Joseph Smith: Psychobiography and the Book of Mormon*, 14/1–2:223.
- McGregor, Russell C., review of James Patrick Holding, *The Mormon Defenders: How Latter-day Saint Apologists Misinterpret the Bible*, 14/1–2:315.
- Midgley, Louis, review of Carl Mosser, “And the Saints Go Marching On,” in *The New Mormon Challenge*, 58–88, 14/1–2:139.
- Midgley, Louis, review of Richard N. Ostling and Joan K. Ostling, *Mormon America: The Power and the Promise*, 14/1–2:139.
- Paulsen, David L., review of Francis J. Beckwith, Carl Mosser, and Paul Owen, eds., *The New Mormon Challenge*, 14/1–2:99.
- Ricks, Stephen D., review of Richard R. Hopkins, *Biblical Mormonism: Responding to Evangelical Criticism of LDS Theology*, 14/1–2:337.
- Rust, Richard Dilworth, review of Hugh W. Pinnock, *Finding Biblical Hebrew and Other Ancient Literary Forms in the Book of Mormon*, 14/1–2:83.
- Tvedtnes, John A., review of Kenneth Lutes and Lyndell Lutes, *Words of Christ Restored for the Last Days*, 14/1–2:79.
- Tvedtnes, John A., review of Michael Drosnin, *The Bible Code*, 14/1–2:329.

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