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Title Editor's Introduction: Of "Galileo Events," Hype, and Suppression: Or, Abusing Science and Its History

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Abstract Introduction to the current issue, including editor's picks. Peterson discusses the so-called Galileo event that some Book of Mormon critics believe will soon occur, thus expanding the separation between religion and science until religion subsides to science. He also addresses the lack of Near Eastern culture among Native Americans, a common argument against the authenticity of the Book of Mormon.

Editor's Introduction

**OF "GALILEO EVENTS," HYPE,
AND SUPPRESSION: OR, ABUSING
SCIENCE AND ITS HISTORY**

Daniel C. Peterson

*The normal way of dealing with the Book of Mormon
"scientifically" has been first to attribute to the Book of
Mormon something it did not say, and then to refute the
claim by scientific statements that have not been proven.*

Hugh Nibley¹

On 5 August 2000 in Salt Lake City, Brent Lee Metcalfe, a Utah Web designer and the author or editor of several publications critical of fundamental Latter-day Saint beliefs, moderated a Sunstone symposium panel entitled "Understanding Mormonism's Sealed Book: *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives*."² In his concluding remarks, Metcalfe alluded to a "Galileo event" that he saw "on the horizon." By a "Galileo event," he explained, he was referring to "an event where the cognitive dissonance between science

This essay is dedicated to the memory of Marc Schindler, of Spruce Grove, Alberta, who died, much too young, on 19 October 2003. He was both an able defender of the faith and a committed believer in science and will be sorely missed.

1. Hugh Nibley, *Since Cumorah*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1988), 214. The first edition appeared in 1967.

2. The panel's title refers to Mark D. Thomas's book *Digging in Cumorah: Reclaiming Book of Mormon Narratives* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1999). The three members of the panel were Thomas himself, Kevin Christensen, and Blake Ostler.

and religion becomes so severe that the religion abandons the tradition, acquiescing to science.”³

He had, he told the audience, been reading quite a few articles about population genetics, and his reading had spoken to him with startling clarity. “You do not have Middle Eastern, Near Eastern, influence among Native Americans,” Metcalfe declared. “It simply is not there.” Then, even growing somewhat emotional at one stage, Metcalfe told of his own personal response to his reading. “I felt my heart start pounding. I felt uncomfortable. I didn’t want to read it anymore.” Although he said that he disliked the term because of what he described as its “political baggage,” Metcalfe identified himself to his listeners as an “atheist.” That word, he told them, “would aptly describe where I am in relationship to God.” Nonetheless, he reported, he was surprised by his own reaction to what he had read.

All of a sudden I felt this discomfort for my family and friends, that we could be going down a road where, effectively, people like . . . myself could become the rule in Mormonism, and not the exception. Not only do I think a “Galileo event” is on the horizon—in many ways, if it opens our minds, I hope it is.⁴

But Metcalfe did not only dream of a wonderful, atheist-making event “on the horizon.” He worked to make it a reality. At the August 2001 Sunstone symposium, also in Salt Lake City, a panel was actually devoted to the topic of “DNA and Lamanite Identity: A Galileo Event.”

3. I have transcribed Metcalfe’s comments from an official Sunstone tape of the session (SL 00 #331). While transcribing them, incidentally, I heard the voice of Mark Thomas predict, rather grimly, that the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies (FARMS) would dominate the battle over the historicity of the Book of Mormon—not through the merits of its arguments, but by sheer force of cash. FARMS, he sadly informed his audience, had taken in twenty-six million dollars during the previous year alone. I was sipping a drink when I heard this revelation and nearly inundated my tape recorder with apple juice. Twenty-six million dollars in annual income? We couldn’t begin to *spend* such a sum, nor even a substantial fraction of it. Unfortunately, Thomas’s allegation is wildly incorrect.

4. *Ibid.*

Brent Metcalfe convened and (interesting word) moderated that discussion too, and he made it clear once again that he believes that the publication of studies relating to Amerindian DNA is proving to be a “Galileo event” for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in general and for the Book of Mormon in particular. Specifically, in his opinion, such studies will ultimately compel Latter-day Saints to relinquish their long-held belief that the Book of Mormon is an authentic history of authentically ancient peoples.

Among the 2001 panelists was Thomas W. Murphy, an anthropologist, college teacher, and anthropology department chair in the state of Washington. As foreshadowed by considerable activity on the Web, Murphy was about to publish an article attacking the historicity of the Book of Mormon in a Metcalfe-edited anthology devoted to the same overall mission and entitled *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*. In that article, based upon a survey of numerous articles about Amerindian DNA and the entry of human beings into the Americas, he would announce that science had now definitively proven the Book of Mormon historically false.⁵

The 2001 panel’s title refers, of course, to the Italian astronomer Galileo Galilei (1564–1642), whose discoveries, opposed by the leadership of the Catholic Church in his day, ultimately led to the replacement of an ancient religiophilosophical view of the cosmos by a modern scientific view. Galileo first encountered serious difficulties with church leaders for his *Letters on the Sun Spots* (1613), in which, among other things, he advocated the heliocentric view of the planetary system advanced by the Polish astronomer and clergyman Nicolaus Copernicus (1473–1543). Galileo attempted to demonstrate that the Copernican system had biblical support, but the theory was condemned nonetheless, and, in 1616, he was warned by the pope to defend it no more. In 1632 Galileo published his famous *Dialogue on the Two Chief World Systems*, for which he was once again summoned to

5. The article eventually appeared as Thomas W. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” in *American Apocrypha: Essays on the Book of Mormon*, ed. Dan Vogel and Brent Lee Metcalfe (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 47–77.

Rome, tried by the Inquisition, compelled to formally abjure belief in the Copernican theory, and placed under house arrest near Florence—which lasted until his death a decade later.

The story of Galileo, which pits such stock villains as the Inquisition and an obscurantist ecclesiastical hierarchy against the romantic figure of a brilliant, fearless, and heroically lonely seeker after scientific truth, has long served as a powerful symbol of the struggle of rationality against irrationality, of science against religion, of reason against blind, dogmatic faith.⁶ Indeed, at least in the United States, its one real rival as an illustration of what some regard as the difficult and martyr-strewn ascent from the darkness of religious dogma to the sunny uplands of objective scientific truth is the notorious Scopes Monkey Trial of 1925, in which Clarence Darrow squared off against William Jennings Bryan over the question of whether Tennessee law prohibited the teaching of evolution in the public schools. One of the lessons often drawn from these stories—which constitute genuine myths in the standard scholarly sense of that term—is that the march of science onward and upward is inevitable and irresistible, that the forces of irrationalism that vainly oppose it are doomed to humiliating failure.

In that light, it was predictable that, when Thomas Murphy threw down the gauntlet to the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints—I use the heroic language of knight-errantry in order to maintain the mood—declaring that the science of DNA has proven the Book of Mormon historically false, and especially when his local church leaders summoned him to a disciplinary council, seeming parallels to Galileo would emerge as fodder for propagandistic treatments of the case.

“Tom Murphy is the Galileo for Mormons,” Maxine Hanks, a former Latter-day Saint, told the *Los Angeles Times*.⁷ Some Internet post-

6. Henrik Ibsen provides a secular analogue to this venerable motif in his play *An Enemy of the People*.

7. As cited in William Lobdell and Larry B. Stammer, “Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test: Anthropologist May Be Ousted for Questioning Teachings about Native American Ancestry,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 December 2002, home edition, A21.

ings suggest that Murphy's own students have called him "the Mormon Galileo," and Murphy himself seems, to a certain extent at least, to have accepted the role. "The Mormon faith is going to survive one way or another," he told the same reporters who had interviewed Maxine Hanks. "The Catholic Church survived Galileo, but they first had to admit they were wrong."⁸ He has actively (and effectively) sought publicity for his personal story, as well as for his views. Press releases, for example—composed and distributed by Murphy's partisans, not by the Church of Jesus Christ—publicly announced that he would likely be excommunicated during a disciplinary council to be held on 8 December 2002. This prompted various news agencies in the United States to spread the word abroad, which gave additional press to the book in which his article had appeared. Although the disciplinary council was eventually postponed, some of the candlelight vigils went on as planned, amplified by considerable international publicity.⁹

Despite the fact that he has admitted in Internet communications to not having attended Latter-day Saint church services for a decade or more, Murphy claims that he wants to remain a member of the church. "I do value my Mormon heritage," he says. "I would rather make a constructive contribution to the church's abandonment of its racist beliefs about American Indians than to leave the church."¹⁰ He views himself as a reformer of the faith held by others. "As Mormons," he writes, "we have a moral and ethical obligation to discontinue this view of Native American origins and publicly disavow the offensive teaching that a dark skin is a physical trait of God's malediction."¹¹

And the Book of Mormon is clearly an offense to Thomas Murphy. His comments on it have been anything but temperate, as a

8. Cited in Lobdell and Stammer, "Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test." Actually, of course, the Catholic Church did quite well during the several centuries that elapsed between the trial of Galileo and John Paul II's recent apology regarding it.

9. I am personally aware—because I was interviewed for and quoted in them—of articles in such newspapers and periodicals as the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Seattle Post*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, the *Economist*, and even the *Scotsman*. There were undoubtedly others.

10. "Scholar's LDS Tribunal Postponed," *Salt Lake Tribune*, 9 December 2002, B3.

11. Murphy, "Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics," 68.

pair of examples should sufficiently illustrate: “Through publication of the Book of Mormon, Joseph Smith accomplished, via writing and representation, the same sort of erasure that Bishop Landa sought through brutality, torture, and consuming fire when he destroyed most of the Mayan codices that had survived the initial stages of the conquest.”¹² Thus Murphy metaphorically equates Joseph Smith with a Spanish Conquest torturer and book burner. Further, after learning of the delay of his disciplinary council by his stake president, Murphy sent an open letter to his supporters in which he declares:

The postponement of this disciplinary council is truly a victory for all those who favor an honest search for truth and are willing to speak out against the injustices of racism, sexism, homophobia, and anti-intellectualism.

. . . [T]he belief that American Indians came from Israel is [tantamount] to claiming the earth is flat. . . [S]cientific evidence, to be outlined in future publications, likewise indicates the absurdity of the Book of Mormon’s claim that a dark skin is a curse from God for wickedness.¹³

“I sincerely hope,” he continues,

that the conciliatory approach taken by my stake president means that the LDS Church is willing to consider the possibility that Lamanites may not be the principal ancestors of the American Indians, that a dark skin is not a curse from God, and that scholars may now openly discuss the Book of Mormon as nineteenth-century fiction.¹⁴

12. Thomas W. Murphy, “Laban’s Ghost: On Writing and Transgression,” *Dialogue* 30/2 (1997): 118.

13. Thomas Murphy, letter to family, friends, colleagues, and supporters, 7 December 2002, as reproduced in a post from “exegete” [Brent Lee Metcalfe] on Zion’s Lighthouse Message Board: pub26.ezboard.com/fpacumenispagesfrm56.showMessageRange?topicID=343.topic&start=1&stop=20 (accessed 30 December 2003). I have replaced the obviously incorrect *paramount* with *tantamount*, which seems to be what Murphy intended.

14. *Ibid.*

Ultimately, his stake president canceled plans to call Murphy to account for his vocally apostate ways. Now that the never-held disciplinary council has lost its news appeal, though, Murphy has sought other ways to keep the publicity going. He appears intent on convincing the church to abandon the Book of Mormon, and his actions seem designed to embarrass the church in the press. Teaming with Simon Southerton, an Australian biologist who once served as a bishop in the Church of Jesus Christ but who now vehemently rejects his former faith, Murphy prepared a brief item for *Anthropology News*, a publication of the American Anthropological Association. That article appeared early in 2003, significantly entitled “Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons.”¹⁵

An energetic crusader, Murphy has also taken his campaign on the road, denouncing not only the Book of Mormon but, more comprehensively, the Church of Jesus Christ as a whole. Already in his 7 December 2002 open letter, he had noted that

Supporters informed me that candle light vigils scheduled to coincide with my church disciplinary council had been planned in as many as ten different cities around the country. Edmonds Community College officials assured me that the college respected my academic freedom while students, faculty, and administrators rallied behind me in a quest for truth and justice. . . .

I have heard that some of my supporters still want to hold a rally in Salt Lake City to bring attention to the racism and sexism in Mormon scripture and to object to homophobia and intellectual intimidation in the LDS Church. Kerrie, Jessyca,

15. Thomas W. Murphy and Simon G. Southerton, “Genetic Research a ‘Galileo Event’ for Mormons,” *Anthropology News* 44/2 (2003): 20. A good early response from a believing Latter-day Saint perspective is Kevin L. Barney, “A Brief Review of Murphy and Southerton’s ‘Galileo Event,’” on the Web site of the Foundation for Apologetic Information and Research (FAIR) at www.fairlds.org/apol/bom/bom08.html (accessed 30 December 2003). As of this same date, the FAIR Web site offered a number of other interesting pieces on the Amerindian DNA issue, including, but not limited to, Brant Gardner, “The Tempest in a Teapot: DNA Studies and the Book of Mormon” (www.fairlds.org/apol/bom/bom07.html), and a video of remarks by Brigham Young University microbiologist and DNA researcher Dr. Scott Woodward (www.fairlds.org/pubs/woodward01).

and I support those endeavors and will invite those supporters gathering in Lynnwood, Washington to come to our home in Edmonds for a thank you reception.¹⁶

Going far beyond his purported expertise on Amerindian DNA in his August 2003 Sunstone presentation in Salt Lake City, Murphy assaulted both the church in general and Brigham Young University in particular for an allegedly “repressive social atmosphere,” “a stifling social atmosphere which is destructive to free inquiry and honest introspection,” as well as for “intellectual intimidation,” “character assassination,” and “ecclesiastical abuse.”¹⁷ Allying himself with fundamentalist

16. Murphy, letter to family, friends, colleagues, and supporters. Sounding the same theme of alleged Mormon “intellectual intimidation,” Murphy’s supporter Kathy Worthington, a Salt Lake City gay-rights activist and a zealous crusader against the Church of Jesus Christ, told the *Los Angeles Times* regarding her neighbors, “They say, ‘When the prophet speaks, the thinking has been done.’” Cited in Lobdell and Stammer, “Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test.” Of course, she was actually paraphrasing not her Latter-day Saint neighbors but a June 1945 ward teachers’ message that George Albert Smith, then President of the church, had expressly repudiated. On that ward teachers’ message and President Smith’s view of it, see “A 1945 Perspective,” *Dialogue* 19/1 (1986): 35–39; see also www.fairlds.org/apol/misc/misc07.html. One might have imagined that an explicit statement from the President of the church—for, after all, “when the prophet speaks, the thinking has been done”—would by now have dampened anti-Mormon ardor for this otherwise obscure and nearly six-decades-old ward teaching message. But one would, in that case, be underestimating the willingness of those hostile to the faith of the Latter-day Saints to use any available weapon against it. In a letter to Dean Brimhall, the uncle of Joseph Smith “biographer” Fawn M. Brodie, Elder Albert E. Bowen of the Quorum of the Twelve rejected the ward teachers’ message even more forcefully than had President Smith and explained that it had been written by a young clerk in the Presiding Bishop’s office and sent out without anyone in authority having approved it. Albert E. Bowen to Dean Brimhall, 26 October 1946, p. 1. Dean R. Brimhall papers, MS 114, box 12, folder 21, Manuscripts Division, J. Willard Marriott Library, Salt Lake City, Utah. Few living Latter-day Saints have ever heard of the June 1945 ward teachers’ message, or even, nowadays, of ward teaching. In certain minds, though, the jottings of a long-forgotten clerk have attained an odd sort of celebrity immortality.

17. Now in print as Thomas W. Murphy, “Simply Implausible: DNA and a Meso-american Setting for the Book of Mormon,” *Dialogue* 36/4 (2003): 130. In this same article, Murphy identifies one specific person by name, and only one, as an unashamed defender of such evils (*ibid.*, 131 n. 85). Judging from the list of the abuses and injustices that this person is said to endorse, he appears to be an unscrupulous individual with disturbing tendencies toward theocratic fascism. Modesty, however, forbids me to say more.

and evangelical Protestant critics of the church, he addressed the 19–20 September 2003 “Help for the Hurting Conference” in Keokuk, Iowa, across the Mississippi River from Nauvoo, under the sponsorship of a Nauvoo-based anti-Mormon operation called Mission to Mormons. Although his own religious convictions, if he has any, are unclear, his fellow speakers seem to have included such notables as Sandra Tanner, codirector (with her husband, Jerald) of the Utah Lighthouse Ministry; Colleen Ralson, director of the Nauvoo Christian Visitors Center; and James Walker, president of Watchman Fellowship (“A Ministry of Christian Discernment”). He has arranged public lectures—at his own college and at others—in which he discusses the Book of Mormon.¹⁸

Most notably, Murphy and Southerton participated in interviews for a videotape entitled *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*, produced in 2003 by Living Hope Ministries of Brigham City, Utah. In his videotaped comments, during which he repeatedly characterizes himself as a “Mormon scholar” and agonizes in the first-person plural about the faulty arguments “we Mormon scholars” use and the inevitable defeat “we” face, Murphy announces that “we have to confront not just the possibility but the almost inevitability that Joseph Smith was attempting to deceive people.”¹⁹ Among other things, he says, Joseph was being deceptive when he claimed to possess real, physical gold plates.²⁰

18. For example, during a recent two-month period for which I was able to find his speaking schedule, he delivered a lecture entitled “Sin, Skin, and Seed: Mistakes of Men in the Book of Mormon” at Edmonds Community College on 25 February 2003. He repeated that lecture at the “Nordic Lounge” of Long Beach City College, in California, on 20 March 2003; during the 18–19 April Sunstone Symposium West, in San Francisco, California; and, on 26 April, at a Pacific Northwest regional meeting of the American Academy of Religion at the University of Idaho, in Moscow, Idaho.

19. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*, videocassette (Brigham City, Utah: Living Hope Ministries, 2003).

20. Murphy does not, however, even begin to come to terms with the testimonies of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon, who claim to have seen and, in a number of cases, to have “hefted” the plates. The classic treatment of them is Richard Lloyd Anderson, *Investigating the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1981). An important collection of materials is Lyndon W. Cook, ed., *David Whitmer Interviews: A Restoration Witness* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1991). See also Eldin Ricks, *The Case of the Book of Mormon Witnesses* (Salt Lake City: Olympos, 1961);

Murphy's costars in *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* express themselves with similar decisiveness. "I think," says Simon Southerton, setting up a major subtheme of the Living Hope video, "the reliability of DNA evidence can be seen in the fact that it is used in courts of law."²¹ Randall Shortridge, a biologist and former Mormon who was also interviewed by Living Hope Ministries for *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*, continues with the point, declaring:

When it comes down to DNA fingerprinting, people have to realize how inclusive it is. Given evidence that we have today, if this was taken into court, a court of law, it would be an open-and-shut case. And that's because the DNA fingerprinting evidence is unquestionable. The American Indian came from Asia.²²

Driving the point home, Murphy announces:

The DNA evidence, the same type of evidence that they use in criminal court cases, clearly discredits the Book of Mormon. If Joseph Smith was being charged with fraud in a court of law today and the DNA evidence was there, the DNA evidence would, in a sense, implicate him in a fraud.

Milton V. Backman Jr., *Eyewitness Accounts of the Restoration* (Orem, Utah: Grandin Book, 1983; Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1986); and Rhett Stephens James, *The Man Who Knew: The Early Years, A Play about Martin Harris, 1824–1830* (Cache Valley, Utah: Martin Harris Pageant Committee, 1983). Matthew Roper treats some of the standard anti-Mormon charges against the witnesses in his review of *Mormonism: Shadow or Reality?* by Jerald Tanner and Sandra Tanner, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 4 (1992): 170–76, and in his article "Comments on the Book of Mormon Witnesses: A Response to Jerald and Sandra Tanner," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 2/2 (1993): 164–93. Two significant recent discussions are 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), 117–73; and Larry E. Morris, "'The Private Character of the Man Who Bore That Testimony': Oliver Cowdery and His Critics," *FARMS Review* 15/1 (2003): 311–51.

21. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

22. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

In other words, the Book of Mormon would not stand up in a court of law today.²³

The Living Hope Ministries video closes with an invitation to each of its viewers to recite a version of the standard fundamentalist/evangelical Protestant “sinner’s prayer,” asking Jesus “to come into my heart and be my Lord and Savior.” How, the video’s peroration asks, can we know “who God is, who Jesus Christ really is, and how we can be saved from our sins? That’s found in the Bible, and that is what we encourage everyone to base their zeal for God on.”²⁴

But even though the video has recently been hailed by no less a voice than *Christianity Today* magazine as “well-reasoned, articulate, and irenic,” there is something very significant missing from *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.²⁵ Not even the continuing drumbeat of attacks on the Book of Mormon and the final invitation to accept the version of Jesus taught in conservative Protestantism can quite obscure a gigantic, gaping omission. The video’s announcer explains:

It was theorized early on that Native Americans must have entered the New World across the narrow strip of water known today as the Bering Strait. This would mean that, instead of Israelites traveling more than 8500 miles of ocean, Asians would have only had to cross a little more than fifty miles to reach the Americas.²⁶

The narrator is unmistakably, if somewhat confusedly, referring to the now-venerable theory that America was first colonized by early nomadic hunter-gatherers who, probably in pursuit of game, crossed from Siberia to Alaska at a time when the continents were linked and the transition was therefore both easy and unnoticeable. Of course, Living Hope Ministries might have reminded the video’s audience that the one-time

23. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

24. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

25. John W. Kennedy, “Winning Them Softly: Evangelicals Try to Reach Mormons with Respect—and Hard Science,” *Christianity Today* 48/2 (2004): 18.

26. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

existence of a land bridge across the Bering Strait no more rules out an Israelite voyage to the Americas than it ruled out subsequent voyages by Leif Ericsson, Christopher Columbus, and many others. But the omission is even more fundamental than that: Living Hope Ministries and its *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* video don't tell their audience *when* the Bering land bridge is thought to have existed.

I, however, am *happy* to tell.

The conventional scientific wisdom, so far as I can determine, is that the Bering land bridge ceased to exist at least 11,000 years ago—which puts it at or before 9,000 B.C. And many estimates have it submerged below the sea at a yet earlier period. Even if it is suggested that the earliest colonists came across the strait by boat, the process is typically said to have begun about twenty thousand years ago.

Why would a video produced by fundamentalist/evangelical Protestants mention the Bering Strait but omit the relevant dates? It takes little reflection to suggest a very likely answer. They almost certainly omit that information because the idea of such early migrations by primitive hunter-gatherers conflicts dramatically with typical conservative readings of the first chapters of Genesis. It will be recalled that the famous Archbishop James Ussher (1581–1656), reckoning from information contained in the Bible, placed the creation of the world in 4004 B.C. Very many conservative Protestants still put a historical Adam in or about that same period. Hence, the existence of identifiable humans many thousands of years prior to that time is problematic for literalistic Protestant understandings of scripture.

Strikingly, while some conservative Protestants appear eager to latch onto any piece of “scientific” evidence (both real and imagined) to “prove” that the teachings of the Church of Jesus Christ are false, much of the “evidence” that they elicit could be cited against the Bible every bit as easily as—or, as writers for this issue of the *Review* would argue, even more easily than—against the Book of Mormon. The DNA studies alluded to by Living Hope Ministries and the *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* video, for example, suggest that the Americas were populated some 30,000–40,000 years ago. But Living Hope Ministries fails to mention that fact. Moreover, the scientists who are trying to reconstruct human prehistory on the basis

of these same DNA studies frequently also contend that all humans descend from a single female ancestress—often, in rather ironic deference to the biblical narrative, called “Eve”—who lived 140,000–290,000 years ago. Yet, once again, since the suggested chronology clearly contradicts the interpretation of the biblical account favored by many evangelical and virtually all fundamentalist Protestants, *Living Hope* tells only part of the story and leaves out the part that would damage their own position or that, at the very least, would alienate the conservative Protestants who are their primary constituency and, no doubt, the principal source of their funding. Even worse—from a fundamentalist Protestant point of view—almost all numbers that have been calculated for human migration studies assume that humans and chimpanzees diverged from a common biological ancestor about five million years ago.²⁷

A passage from science writer Steve Olson will serve to illustrate the difficult predicament of literalistic Bible believers who seek to enlist DNA studies in their holy crusade against Mormonism.²⁸ “Human DNA,” he writes,

the long, complex molecule that transmits genetic information from one generation to the next, bears the indelible imprint of human history. Our DNA records the evolution of an African ape that began walking on two legs more than 4 million years ago. It documents the emergence of modern humans on the savannas of eastern Africa about 7,500 generations ago.²⁹

This is hardly the view of human origins favored among conservative Christian readers of the Bible. Thus, when Olson says that geneticists “are discovering the immense gulf that separates what actually happened in the past from the stories we tell ourselves about the past,”³⁰ the solvent he describes applies at least as well to fundamentalist

27. John M. Butler, e-mail correspondence to Daniel C. Peterson, 25 September 2003.

28. Their predicament is illustrated even more graphically by a Greg Kearney cartoon posted on the FAIR Web site at www.fairlds.org/apol/humor/humor07.html (accessed 30 December 2003).

29. Steve Olson, *Mapping Human History: Genes, Race, and Our Common Origins* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002), 4.

30. *Ibid.*

Protestant views of the book of Genesis as it does to naïve Latter-day Saint views of the Book of Mormon.

If the Living Hope Ministries video were simply an isolated instance, one might hesitate to draw much of a conclusion from it about the intellectual honesty of the fundamentalist/evangelical anti-Mormon industry. But it is not. In the August–October 2002 *Saints Alive Newsletter*, Ed Decker, famous for his sensationalistic and inflammatory anti-Mormon pseudodocumentary *The God Makers*, expressed his excitement about the then-forthcoming video:

Now, finally, incontrovertible scientific evidence can either prove the Book of Mormon to be true [and therefore Mormonism is the true, restored gospel] or the Book of Mormon is a fabricated tale and the claims of Mormonism false. . . . Finally, a way to *scientifically* determine if Mormonism’s claims are true or false. Let’s get behind this exciting project!³¹

But nothing in Decker’s article signals any acknowledgment of the fact that current DNA theories also stand unequivocally against the literal reading of Genesis presumably favored by most, if not all, of his target audience.³²

The spring 2003 newsletter of Concerned Christians and Former Mormons, an organization based in southern California that bills itself as “A Ministry of Reconciliation,” was likewise silent about the implications for its own theological position of current DNA research and theories.

While most religions do not make claims that allow for testing by DNA science, Mormonism does. The Book of Mormon proposes to be a historical story about a family of Hebrews who sailed a ship from the Middle East to the Americas 600 B.C.

31. Ed Decker, “D.N.A. Research and the Origin of the Book of Mormon: Final Proof,” *Saints Alive Newsletter*, August–October 2002, 3, 5, brackets and bracketed material in the original.

32. It is difficult to know what, if anything, Decker himself believes. A fairly detailed examination of a shameful but representative Decker creation can be found in Daniel C. Peterson, “P. T. Barnum *Redivivus*,” review of *Decker’s Complete Handbook on Mormonism*, by Ed Decker, *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 7/2 (1995): 38–105.

Joseph Smith claimed the principle [*sic*] origins of American Indians is Hebrew, however, recent DNA research has now positively established that the principle [*sic*] ancestry of the Native Americans is Asian, not Hebrew.

The video interviews LDS Molecular Biologist and/or Anthropologist, all have Ph.Ds. This is a powerful tool to train and equip Christians to stand against the false religion of Mormonism.³³

The June 2003 issue of *Through the Maze*, the newsletter of James Spencer's Idaho-based anti-Mormon crusade, features an article about the Living Hope Ministries video entitled "'DNA vs. the Book of Mormon': The Best Thing since *The God Makers*." (The subtitle suggests that Spencer's standards are not overly rigorous.) In it, Thomas Murphy becomes an "archaeologist," while, confronted with the irresistible advance of Mormon-crushing science (at least, as that science is depicted by James Spencer), believing Latter-day Saint and Idaho State University biology professor Trent Stephens is dismissed merely as "one of the Mormon holdouts."³⁴ Very debatably, the late General Authority B. H. Roberts is said, "when he was near his death," to have reached "the conclusion that the Book of Mormon could not be of divine origin."³⁵ This is an old claim of Spencer's, always presented as simple fact rather than as highly dubious theory and always expressed, significantly enough, in Spencer's words rather than in the words of Elder Roberts.³⁶ Perhaps

33. "Two New Videos Expose Joseph Smith," *Concerned Christians and Former Mormons: A Ministry of Reconciliation*, Spring 2003, 1, with spelling, grammar, and punctuation faithfully reproduced from the original.

34. "DNA vs. the Book of Mormon: The Best Thing since *The God Makers*," *Through the Maze*, June 2003, 1, 4. Spencer refers to other, unnamed "Mormon holdouts" on page 3, where he attributes to them an opinion that, one guesses from his brief and badly garbled summary, must be related to a limited-geography view of the Book of Mormon. For the position of Trent Stephens, see D. Jeffrey Meldrum and Trent D. Stephens, "Who Are the Children of Lehi?" *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 38–51.

35. "DNA vs. the Book of Mormon," 3.

36. For a response to Spencer's untenable accusation, see Daniel C. Peterson, "Yet More Abuse of B. H. Roberts," 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.

even more incredibly, Dr. John L. Sorenson, a principal figure in establishing and leading the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies from its beginnings, immediate past editor of the *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies*, author of numerous very important works on the Book of Mormon, ardent advocate of transoceanic contacts between the Old and New Worlds before Columbus, and, most importantly, a life-long and very vocal believer in the antiquity of the Book of Mormon, is misrepresented as supporting Thomas Murphy's position, testifying (not in his own words, needless to say, but in James Spencer's) that "the American Indians clearly did not descend from Hebrews; the languages of the New World do not have a Hebrew root; and the physical and biological characteristics of the American Indians are not Semitic."³⁷

I brought Spencer's summary of his position to the attention of Sorenson, who had the following to say in response:

Spencer's assertions, like so many criticisms of the Book of Mormon, are phrased in such a manner that they do not allow a clear answer.

(1) "The American Indians clearly did not descend from Hebrews." How does one know this? First, "the American Indians" is a category that has no biologically defined meaning, despite the fact that some anthropologists carelessly continue to use the expression. It is as biologically vague as, say, "the Pacific Islanders." A recent study purporting "to scrutinize the male ancestry of extant Native American populations" has

37. "DNA vs. the Book of Mormon," 2. John L. Sorenson's works include *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and FARMS, 1985); *Mormon's Map* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 2000); *Images of Ancient America: Visualizing Book of Mormon Life* (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1998); *The Geography of Book of Mormon Events: A Source Book* (Provo, Utah: FARMS, 1992); and, with Martin H. Raish, *Pre-Columbian Contact with the Americas across the Oceans: An Annotated Bibliography*, 2nd rev. ed., 2 vols. (Provo, Utah: Research Press, 1996). Those curious to know Sorenson's own views on the DNA controversy, as expressed by himself rather than by the anti-Mormon James Spencer, should read John L. Sorenson and Matthew Roper, "Before DNA," *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 6–23, as well as the unsigned essay "The Problematic Role of DNA Testing in Unraveling Human History" that appeared under his editorship in *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 9/2 (2000): 66–74.

been published. The only sample located north of Panama that these scientists studied consisted of 48 individuals who spoke a single (“Indian”) language and who lived in the province of Saskatchewan, Canada (Maria-Catira Bortolini et al., “Y-chromosome evidence for differing ancient demographic histories in the Americas,” *Amer. Journ. of Human Genetics* 73:524–39, 2003). This kind of sampling is typical of the casual methodology followed in molecular biological analyses of “American Indians.” As for the category “Hebrews,” there is absolutely no significant information which can be used to characterize ancient “Hebrews” in terms of DNA or any other systematic biological terms.

In short, the assertion Spencer makes is meaningless because the terms have not been, and probably cannot be, defined.

(2) “The languages of the New World do not have a Hebrew root.” There may have been as many as 1500 or even 2000 languages spoken by the inhabitants of the Americas when European explorers first encountered them. Of those the number that have been given study that is more than a “lick-and-a-promise” probably does not exceed 150. Most conventional linguists have been busy describing and recording those few languages; understandably, they have not been willing to “waste their time,” as they would describe it, on systematic comparisons between the Hebrew language and any New World tongues. (A handful of unconventional linguists have, however, begun to make distant comparisons with results that raise valid questions about possible trans-oceanic language sharing [Stubbs, Foster, Westcott, Key, Sadowszky]). The fact is that the question Spencer presumes to answer has hardly been raised yet.

The only valid statement one might offer in this area of scholarship would be something like this: “Extremely limited linguistic study has so far not shown enough evidence to convince most linguists that there is a Hebrew connection

with any Native American language. As serious studies are implemented, we will know more.”

(3) “The physical and biological characteristics of the American Indians are not Semitic.” In the first place, “Semitic” is a language category, not a biological one. Secondly, as explained above, “the American Indians” is a vague category without demonstrated unity.

Phil Bronstein, the San Francisco newspaper publisher and [estranged] husband of Sharon Stone, once characterized what the yellow press (i.e., those who tell tales about him and his wife) printed about the couple: “Great, rich detail. Not a single piece of it true.” Wolfgang Pauli, the quantum physics pioneer, once said of a colleague’s appallingly off-base theory, “It’s not even wrong. That’s the zone we’re in here.” And so, it seems, is Spencer.³⁸

So it turns out, just as experienced observers would have predicted, that James Spencer has not accurately represented John Sorenson’s position. And, by now, it will scarcely come as a further surprise to learn that nowhere in Spencer’s article does he say even a word about the time frame proposed by contemporary research into Amerindian origins, including DNA-related research, for the peopling of the Americas, let alone about the implications of that time frame for his own theological position and for the beliefs of his primary audience. And he doesn’t mention chimpanzees.

Bill McKeever’s “DNA and the Book of Mormon Record,” posted on the Web site of the Mormonism Research Ministry, is likewise silent about the full significance of current research on human genetics and the peopling of the Americas, though McKeever rather gleefully predicts that the implications of DNA research portend dire consequences for Latter-day Saint belief.³⁹

38. John L. Sorenson, e-mail communication to Daniel C. Peterson, 15 September 2003.

39. Bill McKeever, “DNA and the Book of Mormon Record,” at www.mrm.org/multimedia/text/dna-bom.html (accessed 30 December 2003).

Again, in an article announcing the Living Hope Ministries video to readers of the *Evangel*—a monthly publication of Utah Missions, Inc., based in Marlow, Oklahoma—UMI’s director, Southern Baptist pastor Dennis A. Wright, depicts Thomas Murphy very much in the manner of a Latter-day Saint Galileo—not as an inactive Mormon and an armchair consumer of articles published by others on DNA research, but as a devoutly pious laboratory researcher shocked by his own cutting-edge results and tragically persecuted by an ecclesiastical hierarchy that fears the truth:

Latter-day Saint Anthropologist Thomas W. Murphy set out to test a key principle of his Mormon faith with the latest technology. . . . He simply wondered: Would DNA analysis show—as taught by *The Book of Mormon*—that American Indians are descended from ancient Israelites? . . .

What did Murphy discover? Are American Indians descended from ancient Israelites? His research scientifically concluded that they are not. The results of his labors? Threatened excommunication.⁴⁰

“The sacred writings of many faiths,” Pastor Wright explains to his largely fundamentalist Protestant readers, “make claims that might not stand up to scientific tests.” (In view of his past arguments and the nature of his audience, it is virtually certain that Pastor Wright and his readers have in mind such texts as the Qur’an and the Hindu scriptures. Certainly they do not intend the Protestant Bible.)

But most faiths avoid conflict with scholarship either because their claims relate to events too far in the past to be tested or because they have reinterpreted their scriptural claims as metaphors, rather than assertions of literal fact.

40. Dennis A. Wright, “DNA vs. the Book of Mormon,” *Evangel* 50/5 (2003): 2, emphasis and other quirks in the original. Utah Missions, Inc., continues to market the Living Hope Ministries video at the time of writing. See, for example, the advertisement in *Evangel* 50/9 (2003): 8.

For devout Mormons, however, neither of those defenses is available.⁴¹

But one might surely be pardoned for wondering how “available” such defenses are to a conservative pastor in the Southern Baptist Convention with regard to the literal historicity of the early chapters of Genesis. Dennis Wright says nothing about the Bering land bridge. He says nothing about the dates suggested by current DNA and other research for the peopling of the Americas. He never mentions chimpanzees. “Now,” he tells his readers, “the same DNA evidence used in courts of law can credibly speak to the validity of the Book of Mormon.”⁴² Does it, one wonders, also speak to the validity of the first chapters of the Bible? Does it accord with his brand of fundamentalist Protestantism?

On 29 September 2003, I received a fundraising letter from Pastor Wright, asking for my gift of one thousand dollars (or less). Above my address, visible as soon as I removed the letter from my mailbox, was written, in capital letters, “DNA PROVES BOOK OF MORMON FALSE!” “Dear Friend of Utah Missions!” began Pastor Wright.

One of the most devastating challenges to the veracity of the claims of the Book of Mormon has been in the area of DNA research. The Book of Mormon claims that the Native Americans—known as Lamanites in the Book of Mormon—are actually the descendents of a migration of Hebrews from Israel around 600 BC. For decades this claim could not be scientifically verified with any degree of accuracy. Now, with modern research in the study of DNA within human chromosomes, one can accurately examine this claim of the Book of Mormon. What does it show?

Well, I won’t hold you in suspense.

41. Wright, “DNA vs. the Book of Mormon,” 2.

42. *Ibid.*

DNA vs. The Book of Mormon provides the answer that there is no genetic connection whatsoever between Native Americans and the Hebrews! If your gift is \$25 or more this month I would like to send you this exciting new video. It is beautifully done and provides yet another proof that the Book of Mormon is not what it claims to be.

Then the letter ends, signed “For the Kingdom’s Sake, Dennis A. Wright.”

I held it up to the light. I scrutinized it carefully. I looked at the back of the paper. I shook the envelope in which it had come, on the off chance that there might still be something inside. But I could find absolutely no mention of the relatively recent divergence of humans from chimpanzees that is apparently also implied by “modern research in the study of DNA within human chromosomes” nor of pre-historic migrations of hunter-gatherers across the Bering Strait.

In a subsequent issue of the *Evangel*, however, Dennis Wright’s colleague, Richard Stout, tells the tabloid’s readers that “Native American DNA unambiguously points to the Bering Straight [*sic*] rather than ancient Judah.” Predictably, though, Stout withholds from them the date of the land bridge to which “Native American DNA unambiguously points.”⁴³

The June–July 2003 issue of the *Newsletter*, published by Dennis Wright’s former boss, fellow Baptist pastor, and—since his eviction from Utah Missions, Inc., which he founded and directed for many decades—bitter cross-town rival John L. Smith includes a rambling article on *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* in which Pastor Smith announces both that “what the *Book of Mormon* claims is untrue according to science” and, rather curiously, that Lehi and his party “were shipwrecked [!] on the eastern shore of the America’s [*sic*].” “There was a time thousands of years ago,” Pastor Smith points out, “when one could walk across from Asia to Alaska during certain

43. Richard Stout, “How Could Joseph Smith Have Known That?” part 21, “Moved by Mormon Missionaries,” *Evangel* 50/12 (2003): 3.

seasons of the year.”⁴⁴ Not surprisingly, though, Pastor Smith doesn’t *specify* the time. How many “thousands of years ago” are we talking about? Pastor Smith is conspicuously silent.

Criticizing Latter-day Saint belief, the Living Hope Ministries video cites Thomas Murphy as complaining:

There’s an inconsistency here. If we accept the validity of genetic research for our genealogical programs, why can’t we accept it for what it tells us about American Indian origins? And I think that there is a little bit of a disconnect going on here in many Mormon minds. They get excited about genetic research when it helps genealogy, but label it—the discussion of it, at least—“anti-Mormon” when it deals with the Book of Mormon.⁴⁵

I myself have not heard a single Latter-day Saint brand the mere discussion of DNA research into Amerindian origins “anti-Mormon.” (Of course, Thomas Murphy moves in rather different circles than I do.) Science isn’t “anti-Mormon.” It cannot be. The hallmark of anti-Mormonism is an agenda, whether covert or openly expressed, of combating the faith of the Latter-day Saints and opposing their church. But such agendas have nothing at all to do with science.

Whatever the merits, though, of Murphy’s claim of an inconsistency in Latter-day Saint attitudes toward genetic research, there is, beyond any possible question, a massive, albeit carefully suppressed, inconsistency in the Living Hope Ministries video *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon* and in the Protestant anti-Mormon ministries that celebrate and promote it. If this group of conservative Protestants accepts the validity of genetic research for their attack on Mormonism, why do they seem not to accept it for what it tells us about human pre-history? There may be “a little bit of a disconnect going on” in some conservative Protestant minds. They appear to become excited about

44. “A Special Video Cassette,” *Newsletter* 2/15 (June/July 2003): 7, emphasis and punctuation in the original.

45. *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*.

genetic research when it purportedly discredits the Book of Mormon but ignore it, or even suppress it, when it seems to conflict with their understanding of the Bible. Are they willing to accept *all* that it tells us about American Indian origins, or do they simply want to pick and choose what will be most helpful to their assault on the faith of the Latter-day Saints?

So much for sectarian critics of Mormonism and the Book of Mormon. But what of the secular critics, who have received so much sympathetic coverage in the press on this issue? Is Thomas Murphy really the Galileo of Mormonism? Dr. Michael Whiting, a respected DNA researcher at Brigham Young University, seems to doubt it. “It’s an inappropriate comparison,” he told the *Los Angeles Times*. “The difference is Galileo got the science right. I don’t think Murphy has.”⁴⁶

Merely surveying quite a few articles on the subject of DNA does not an expert make. In fact, ironically enough, it may even mislead—at least in a minor way. On the basis of a careful computer-aided analysis of more than 120 publications and 23,000 individual DNA sequences, Peter Forster, a geneticist at Cambridge University, has recently announced that between 60 and 70 percent of published studies on the sequences of human mitochondrial DNA contain significant errors and that the actual figure may be higher still. “Sometimes,” according to a report in the science magazine *Discover*, “a single letter is wrong; sometimes entire columns have been transposed.”⁴⁷

46. As cited in Lobdell and Stammer, “Mormon Scientist, Church Clash over DNA Test.” Near the time of his comment to the *Times*, Whiting was very much in the news in his own right, following publication of an important article on DNA and evolutionary theory in the elite scientific journal *Nature*. See Michael F. Whiting, Sven Bradler, and Taylor Maxwell, “Loss and Recovery of Wings in Stick Insects,” *Nature*, 16 January 2003, 264–67. A very brief notice of Whiting’s work appears in the unpaginated “Geographica” section at the front of the September 2003 issue of *National Geographic* magazine. See John L. Eliot, “Evolution: Reinventing the Wing,” *National Geographic* 204/3 (2003): n.p. Whiting elaborates on his position regarding Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon in Michael F. Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon: A Phylogenetic Perspective,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 24–35.

47. Michael Abrams, “Genome Sequences Riddled with Errors,” *Discover*, January 2004, 31.

DNA is a minefield not only for the amateur dabbler but, potentially, for professional but nonspecialist biologists. Since serious scientific study of the subject began more than a century ago, for instance, biologists have assumed that the black death that killed off half of the population of Europe in the fourteenth century was caused by the pathogen *Yersinia pestis*, or the plague. Their assumption seemed to have been conclusively proven three years ago when researchers at France's University of the Mediterranean found segments of *Yersinia* DNA in the teeth of three victims of the black death. In 2003, however, Alan Cooper, who directs the Ancient Biomolecules Centre at Oxford University, demonstrated that those teeth had very likely been contaminated with a modern strain of *Yersinia*, not a medieval one.

"It's incredibly easy," Cooper says, to test a long-dead corpse and find plague. "In fact, it's almost impossible not to get a positive result when doing ancient DNA work because there's so much contamination around. It's incredibly difficult to get an authentic result." Part of the problem, in Cooper's view, is that the researchers are microbiologists, not "proper DNA researchers."

In his own work on 121 teeth from sixty-six victims of the black death, Cooper has used much more sophisticated techniques than those employed by the French researchers to exclude modern biological contamination. Significantly he has been unable to find any trace of *Yersinia* DNA. That does not mean, however, that Cooper himself rejects the notion that the black death was caused by *Yersinia pestis*. (As the old archaeological adage has it, "Absence of evidence is not evidence of absence.") "I'm still a traditionalist," he says. "I think it was *Yersinia*." He simply thinks that the French have failed to prove it.⁴⁸

Certain astute outside observers, indeed, have cautioned that DNA researchers themselves need to cultivate a more circumspect attitude. Thus, the agnostic British philosopher Mary Midgley, in her well-known book *Evolution as a Religion*, writes:

48. Michael Abrams, "Biologists Reexamine Cause of the Black Death," *Discover*, January 2004, 55.

Something must I think be said bluntly and generally for a start about the misleading effect of propaganda claims made on behalf of any line in learning or technology which has recently had some striking successes. Claimants here do not have to be dishonest, or more than usually obsessed by the need for research money, to be led on to exaggerate. There is a dazzlement, an unavoidable confusion of vision, which makes realistic foresight temporarily impossible. Molecular biology or biochemistry (if we may use the more convenient name) has been in this situation since the discovery of DNA. The world has seemed to be its oyster. It is neither accident nor some sinister prejudice on my part which accounts for the high proportion of quotations from biochemists in this book.

Resounding discoveries have combined with a sense of a commanding position on the frontiers of the physical and biological sciences to generate among these scientists a euphoric sense of cognitive omnipotence, of possessing methods which have been finally tested as correct and will be universally applicable. To many of them, their position appears to be that of missionaries from the physical sciences, spreading physical methods once for all over the hitherto recalcitrant realms of the life sciences, and thus over all remaining intellectual areas of the slightest interest.⁴⁹

Mary Midgley cites the eminent quantum physicist and philosopher David Bohm (1917–1992), who wrote along the same lines:

Molecular biologists have discovered that in the growth and reproduction of cells, certain laws that can be given a mechanical form of description are satisfied (especially those having to do with DNA, RNA, the synthesis of proteins). From this, most of them have gone on to the conclusion that ultimately *all* aspects and sides of life will be explained in mechanical terms. But on what basis can this be said?

49. Mary Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion*, 2nd ed. (London: Routledge, 2002), 56.

In this connection, it should be recalled that at the end of the nineteenth century, physicists widely believed that classical physics gave the general outlines of a complete mechanical explanation of the universe. Since then, relativity and quantum theory have overturned such notions altogether. . . .

. . . [C]lassical physics was swept aside and overturned. . . . Is it not likely that modern molecular biology will sooner or later undergo a similar fate?

. . . [T]he notion that present lines of thinking will continue to be validated indefinitely by experiment is just another article of faith, similar to that of the nineteenth-century physicists. . . . [I]s there not a kind of “hubris” that seems rather often to penetrate the very fabric of scientific thought, and to capture the minds of scientists, whenever any particular scientific theory has been successful for some period of time? This takes the form of a fervently held belief that what has been discovered will continue to work indefinitely, ultimately to cover the whole of reality.⁵⁰

Unfortunately, as Midgley observes, the physical sciences have moved on, and social scientists and biologists who attempt to model themselves on an outmoded, discredited conception of physics will ultimately fail, not only because sociology and biology are, in the last analysis, not reducible to physics, but, more fundamentally, because physics itself is not as they imagine it to be. “Physicists, in fact, have abandoned the simple-minded mechanistic thinking which is the basis of biochemical superconfidence, and biochemists are liable to find themselves in the position of missionaries returning to Rome to find that a new pope has reversed the doctrines they were preaching.”⁵¹

Humility is one of the hallmarks of genuine science. So is the formulation of yet-unproved hypotheses. The realization that one’s theories

50. David Bohm, “On the Subjectivity and Objectivity of Knowledge,” in *Beyond Chance and Necessity: A Critical Inquiry into Professor Jacques Monod’s Chance and Necessity*, ed. John Lewis (London: Garnstone, 1974), 127–28.

51. Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion*, 57.

and conclusions and, sometimes, even one's data are always tentative and subject to revision is vital to the openness that has fostered scientific progress.⁵² And if humility and tentativeness are always appropriate for expert specialists, surely such attributes are even more becoming to amateurs. Yet circumspection has been in conspicuously short supply among those who have dogmatically declared that contemporary DNA research has proven the Book of Mormon false.

Since his inaugural appearance at that Sunstone symposium, his participation in the Living Hope Ministries video *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*, and the publication of his article in Dan Vogel and Brent Metcalfe's *American Apocrypha*, Thomas Murphy has completed a doctorate in anthropology at the University of Washington.⁵³ He continues to chair the Department of Anthropology at Edmonds Community College in Lynnwood, Washington, where he has been teaching full time since the fall of 2000. (The college's Web site has had him teaching courses on cultural anthropology, Native American spirituality, and human origins.) Indeed, he is the only full-time instructor in that department, which is rounded out by a single part-time additional teacher. According to the Edmonds Community College Web site, Murphy wrote his dissertation ("Imagining Lamanites: Native Americans and the Book of Mormon") on DNA and the Book of Mormon.⁵⁴

However little Thomas Murphy may resemble Galileo Galilei, one of the world-historical titans at the founding of modern experimental science, the response of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints to his continuing provocations certainly pales in comparison to the

52. Even in mathematics, the idea of "absolute proof" or "mathematical certainty" is being reevaluated, and some mathematicians contend that the best one can hope for, at least in very complex matters, is a much more humble thing, rather like the familiar legal standard of "proof beyond a reasonable doubt." See Keith Devlin, "2003: Mathematicians Face Uncertainty," *Discover*, January 2004, 36.

53. "Anthropology—hometown to cultural relativists and all-night diner for disaffected intellectuals." That, fairly or not, is how Peter Wood, himself an associate professor of anthropology at Boston University, recently described the field. See Peter Wood, "Sex and Consequences," *American Conservative* 2/15 (28 July 2003): 8.

54. See faculty.edcc.edu/~tmurphy/ (accessed 5 February 2004).

Inquisition. At Galileo's fourth deposition, on 22 June 1633, the scientist was formally warned that, if his answers were not more forthcoming, the court would have "recourse to torture," or to what was more delicately referred to at his sentencing as "rigorous examination." Ultimately, of course, Galileo's book was banned, and he was obliged, in writing, to abjure his belief that the earth moved, to recite the seven penitential psalms every week for three years, and to submit to house arrest for the remainder of his life.⁵⁵ Thus far, no similar reports have emerged regarding Murphy, who, though menaced with all the horrors of a meeting with his stake's presidency and high council, still managed to communicate freely and often with journalists worldwide and to address one or two protest rallies. Astonishingly, he remains at large. Moreover, if anyone in this case appears to be pushing a theological agenda—even, in a sense, a kind of *jihad*—that person seems to be Thomas Murphy in his crusade against the Book of Mormon. Like Galileo, who sought to demonstrate that the Bible, properly interpreted, can be reconciled with a heliocentric, Copernican view of planetary astronomy, Murphy has moved from science—or, rather, from his readings about DNA science—to scriptural exegesis. Quite unlike Galileo, however, he has done so in an attempt to show that the Book of Mormon *cannot* be reconciled with the findings of contemporary biology as he interprets them and thus to block off any avenue of "escape" from what he clearly hopes and believes to be an utterly devastating case.

In doing so, however, Murphy may well be distorting the relevant evidence. That will be a focus of several of the reviews in this issue, but I myself would like to mention one matter here. Despite Murphy's hostile characterization of the Book of Mormon as "racist"—which wouldn't concern me overly much even if it were true, since I am entirely willing to entertain the possibility that the ancient Nephites, the

55. See Maurice A. Finocchiaro, ed. and trans., *The Galileo Affair: A Documentary History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 287, 290, 363 nn. 84–85; Karl von Gebler, *Galileo Galilei and the Roman Curia*, trans. Mrs. George Sturge (London: Kegan Paul, 1879), 255–58; Giorgio de Santillana, *The Crime of Galileo* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 292 n. 1. My thanks to Elizabeth W. Watkins for bringing these passages to my attention.

human vehicles through whom most of the Book of Mormon text was given, might have been as prone to ethnocentrism as other ancient and modern peoples demonstrably have been and are—I myself see evidence of an implicitly antiracist polemic in its pages.

For example, I was bothered for a long time by what I regarded as very poor and repetitious style in a portion of the prophecy of Samuel the Lamanite, as recorded in Helaman 13:5–6:

Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto *this people* that the sword of justice hangeth over *this people*; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon *this people*.

Yea, heavy destruction awaiteth *this people*, and it surely cometh unto *this people*, and nothing can save *this people* save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for his people.

It was only when, one afternoon, I was reading the passage aloud that it became clear to me how it ought to be understood:

Behold, I, Samuel, a Lamanite, do speak the words of the Lord which he doth put into my heart; and behold he hath put it into my heart to say unto *this people* that the sword of justice hangeth over *this people*; and four hundred years pass not away save the sword of justice falleth upon *this people*.

Yea, heavy destruction awaiteth *this people*, and it surely cometh unto *this people*, and nothing can save *this people* save it be repentance and faith on the Lord Jesus Christ, who surely shall come into the world, and shall suffer many things and shall be slain for *his people*.

The monotonous repetition of the phrase *this people* creates a mounting tension that is resolved only when readers (and, presumably, Samuel's unhappy listeners) arrive at the contrasting reference to *his people*. In subtle but (I think) unmistakable fashion, "Samuel, a

Lamanite,” very conscious of his own despised status as an outsider, warns the populace of a prosperous but corrupt and wicked Nephite city that their lineage and their complacent sense of being superior to the benighted Lamanites will not save them in the end. “*His* people,” the Lord’s people, those who receive the blessings of the atonement, will be made up of all those who hearken and obey, regardless of ethnicity and racial pride. But this message runs directly contrary to Thomas Murphy’s depiction of the Book of Mormon as a racist text.⁵⁶

Murphy has also arguably misrepresented his opposition. In the article he published in Vogel and Metcalfe’s anthology, Murphy notes recent work by geneticists at Brigham Young University and asserts:

Some optimism was expressed by church members that such research would vindicate the Book of Mormon as an ancient document. The hope was that DNA would link Native Americans to ancient Israelites, buttressing LDS beliefs in a way that has not been forthcoming from archaeological, linguistic, historical, or morphological research.⁵⁷

For those who sought such confirmation from genetics, he says, the results were “disappointing.” Whatever untrained, uninformed, and uninvolved laypeople may have expected from BYU’s ventures into “molecular genealogy,” though, I am unaware of any contemporary Latter-day Saint scholars at BYU or anywhere else who believe that DNA evidence should or even could be used to prove or disprove Book of Mormon origins. Murphy and other critics encourage the impression that Latter-day Saint scientists and other faithful scholars have been seeking DNA evidence for Israelite roots of Native

56. For further consideration of the charge that the Book of Mormon is racist, see John A. Tvedtnes, “The Charge of ‘Racism’ in the Book of Mormon,” in this number of the *Review*, pages 183–97. See also Matthew L. Bowen, “‘O Ye Fair Ones’: An Additional Note on the Meaning of the Name *Nephi*,” *Insights* 23/6 (2003): 2, which argues that frequent Book of Mormon references to the Nephites as “fair” involve an original-language wordplay.

57. Murphy, “Lamanite Genesis, Genealogy, and Genetics,” 47.

Americans. In support of his claim, Murphy cites an article from the *Salt Lake Tribune* entitled “BYU Gene Data May Shed Light on Origin of Book of Mormon’s Lamanites.” However, the article does not sustain that conclusion. Quite the contrary. What it does say is that geneticist Scott Woodward has “no intention of trying to prove or disprove anything contained in the Book of Mormon,” even though “some people may be licking their chops at the prospect of using DNA evidence to refute the story LDS Church founder Joseph Smith told.”⁵⁸

Woodward himself has said much the same thing in a personal note to me:

The molecular genealogy project is designed to assist individuals with questions concerning their genealogy in the recent past, perhaps to the eight-generation level. It has never been intended for use in reconstructing deep genealogies in the sense that most geneticists working in population genetics have used molecular studies.

The title of the newspaper article, observes Woodward, was an “extremely poor choice of headline.” His research project “has nothing to do with this.”⁵⁹

Despite the fact that Scott Woodward’s research never had the slightest connection with the Book of Mormon, other critics have indeed also attempted to link his BYU genetics project to Book of Mormon claims, precisely as the *Tribune* article had predicted. One Web site, for example, refers to the *Tribune* piece and somehow concludes from it that Brigham Young University is “a racist science boot camp.” Another site headlines its article “BYU DNA Project Pits Science against Lamanites” and eagerly asks, “Would it be ironic that state-of-the-art DNA research at the Lord’s own university actually disproves ‘The most correct book on earth,’ the Book

58. Dan Egan, “BYU Gene Data May Shed Light on Origin of Book of Mormon’s Lamanites,” *Salt Lake Tribune*, 30 November 2000, B1, B3.

59. Scott Woodward, communication to Daniel C. Peterson, 15 September 2003.

of Mormon?”⁶⁰ So it seems that, while Latter-day Saint geneticists and scholars at Brigham Young University have plainly not sought to employ DNA studies in order to prove or substantiate the Book of Mormon, critics of the Church of Jesus Christ deeply desire to utilize research in population genetics (done by other scholars for other purposes) in pursuit of their own personal vendettas.

We come back to the heroic legends of Galileo and Darwin confronting the repressive, obscurantist clergy of their day. Stephen M. Barr, a theoretical particle physicist at the Bartol Research Institute of the University of Delaware, has observed:

For centuries the trial of Galileo (1564–1642) was the stuff of myth: Galileo tortured by the Inquisition; his defiant words after recanting (“*e pur se muove*,” “but it does move”); the infallible Church proclaiming the dogma that the Sun goes round the earth. None of these details is true, but that did

60. A word about Joseph Smith’s statement that “I told the brethren that the Book of Mormon was the most correct of any book on earth, and the keystone of our religion, and a man would get nearer to God by abiding by its precepts, than by any other book” (*History of the Church*, 4:461) might be apropos here. Critics of Latter-day Saint belief often take the Prophet’s comment (or, at least, for tactical purposes, pretend to take it) as a commitment to the infallibility of the Book of Mormon. They fail to note that both Mormon and Moroni acknowledged that the text could contain errors of wording (see last paragraph of the title page; 3 Nephi 8:2; Mormon 8:17). Even Joseph Smith acknowledged that he had to spend time “correcting the stereotype plates of some errors which escaped notice in the first edition” of the Book of Mormon (*History of the Church*, 4:494; see also 4:495). Professor Royal Skousen’s meticulous ongoing work on the textual history of the Book of Mormon, sponsored by FARMS, illustrates beyond dispute the fact that the transmission of the text has not proceeded without human error. And why, really, should we expect otherwise? Speaking of incursions of the miraculous into the realm of natural processes, C. S. Lewis observes that “it is . . . inaccurate to define a miracle as something that breaks the laws of Nature. It doesn’t. . . . It is one more bit of raw material for the laws to apply to, and they apply.” A miracle “simply [throws] one event into the general catafact of events and it finds itself at home there and conforms to all other events. . . . The moment it enters [Nature’s] realm it obeys all her laws. Miraculous wine will intoxicate, miraculous conception will lead to pregnancy, inspired books will suffer all the ordinary processes of textual corruption, miraculous bread will be digested.” C. S. Lewis, *Miracles: A Preliminary Study* (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001), 94–95. The Prophet’s statement about its being “the most correct of any book” refers only to the correctness of the “precepts” or doctrines found in the Book of Mormon.

not seem to matter much to those who exalted Galileo as a martyr to truth.⁶¹

The eminent British physicist Sir John Polkinghorne, fellow of the Royal Society, past president of Queen's College, Cambridge, and, relatively late in his life, an ordained Anglican priest and Canon Theologian of Liverpool, notes that, until recently,

the events associated with Galileo and Darwin were still seen by many as representing critical (and for religion, discreditable) moments of significance. More careful and balanced scholarship enables us today to perceive the complexity of those times, in which scientists and religious thinkers alike wrestled with the difficulties and unresolved problems attendant upon periods of great intellectual change and when both kinds of participant were to be found on both sides of the argument. . . . Only in the media, and in popular and polemical scientific writing, does there persist the myth of the light of pure scientific truth confronting the darkness of obscurantist religious error.⁶²

Sir John's description certainly holds true, *mutatis mutandis*, for the current controversy surrounding Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon. Once again, we do not have a simple morality play pitting scientists, all arrayed on the side of Virtue, Truth, and Progress, against a recalcitrant but doomed gaggle of dogmatically antiscientific "holdouts." Among those who reviewed and approved the DNA-related articles in this issue, for instance, is John M. Butler. At the time of writing, Butler serves as bishop of the Gaithersburg 1st Ward of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Maryland. Clearly,

61. Stephen M. Barr, "From Myth to History and Back," review of *Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius*, by William R. Shea and Mariano Artigas, and *Galileo's Mistake: A New Look at the Epic Confrontation between Galileo and the Church*, by Wade Rowland, *First Things* 139 (January 2004): 53.

62. John Polkinghorne, *Belief in God in an Age of Science* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 77.

therefore, according to the schema laid down by the propagandists, he ought to be an antiscientific, obscurantist cleric. In an unfortunate blow to the stereotype, however, he also earned a Ph.D. in chemistry at the University of Virginia and then completed three years of postdoctoral training at the Biotechnology Division of the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) in Gaithersburg. He is now project leader of the Human Identity DNA Technologies Group at NIST and ranks among the foremost experts in the world on the forensic—that is, the legal—use of data from human DNA. Holder of a patent for DNA typing by mass spectrometry with polymorphic DNA repeat markers, he has received a number of scientific awards, including one from the British Medical Association for his 2001 textbook *Forensic DNA Typing: Biology and Technology behind STR Markers*.⁶³ Although still relatively young, Butler has also written numerous articles on DNA typing for various scientific journals and books and has been a guest editor of the *Journal of Forensic Sciences*. That a person of his background and stature continues to affirm his belief in the historical authenticity of the Book of Mormon ought to give pause—though, realistically, it probably won't—to those who push the simplistic notion that “the DNA evidence, the same type of evidence that they use in criminal court cases, clearly discredits the Book of Mormon.”⁶⁴

Similarly, David A. McClellan, who authored the lead article in the group of essays on the question of Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon featured in the present issue, fails to conform to the stereotype of antiscientific Mormon irrationalism that many critics have cultivated in a transparent bid to gain the upper rhetorical hand in their propaganda war against the faith of the Latter-day Saints.

63. John M. Butler, *Forensic DNA Typing: Biology and Technology behind STR Markers* (San Diego: Academic Press, 2001). He is currently at work on an expanded second edition of his book.

64. Thomas Murphy in *DNA vs. the Book of Mormon*. Butler offers his own brief statement on this subject in John M. Butler, “A Few Thoughts from a Believing DNA Scientist,” *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003): 36–37, and will also address it in a forthcoming article in the official monthly magazine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, the *Ensign*.

After receiving a master's degree in genetics from Brigham Young University, he earned a doctorate in organismal and molecular evolution from Louisiana State University and then carried out research as a postdoctoral fellow at the Institute of Statistical Mathematics and the Graduate School of Bioscience and Biotechnology at the Tokyo Institute of Technology in Japan. Currently an assistant professor of integrative biology at Brigham Young University, McClellan has been assigned to teach undergraduate-level courses in evolution and bioinformatics, as well as a graduate-level course in molecular evolution. His research focuses on theoretical aspects of molecular evolution and adaptation. Thus, he is abundantly qualified, according to the simplistic template of the propagandists, to be an avatar of scientific rationality. But he is also a committed member of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints and has held a number of responsible ecclesiastical positions, including service as a ward mission leader and a counselor in a bishopric.

Philosopher Mary Midgley—herself, as already noted, a religious agnostic—remarks that “the contrast between science and religion is unluckily not as plain, nor the relation between them as simple, as is often supposed. . . . Thoughtful scientists have often mentioned this problem, but a great many of their colleagues, and of the public generally, cling to the reassuringly simple opposition.” In her book *Evolution as a Religion*, she provides a list, in two columns, of stereotypical antitheses between science and religion that, she says, are “used rather indiscriminately, as each happens to be convenient, to give colour to the idea of a general crusade of light against darkness.” On the left, associated with “science,” are such terms as *common sense, logic, progress, reason, hard, objective, and male*. On the right, by contrast, are listed such words as *superstition, wish-fulfillment, childishness, mysticism, intuition, credulity, soft, subjective, and female*. “A mental map based on this strange group of antitheses, a map which showed them all as roughly equivalent and was marked only with the general direction ‘keep to the left,’ has for the last century usually been issued to English-speaking scientists

with their first test-tube and has often gone with them to the grave. In spite of its wild incoherence, it still has great influence.”⁶⁵

Polkinghorne’s comments about propagandistic and tendentious misrepresentations of the nineteenth-century Darwinian controversy are applicable, again, to the case of Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon:

The notion that the [general Christian] Church was unanimous in an obscurantist rejection of Darwin in 1859 is as ignorant and incorrect as is also the belief that the scientific community was unanimous in welcoming him. The black-and-white accounts of those intellectually tempestuous times, so assiduously propagated in the media and in certain kinds of popular scientific writing, are just not true.⁶⁶

As Edward J. Larson has demonstrated in his Pulitzer Prize-winning book *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate over Science and Religion*, much of what Americans (and, no doubt, others) think they know about the so-called monkey trial and much of what they think they can conclude from it about issues of science and religion is pure, tendentious fiction, owing more to the play *Inherit the Wind* and to the Hollywood film of the same name than to the actual historical record.⁶⁷

Speaking specifically of Galileo’s case, Stephen Barr observes that the Catholic Church, even at that darkest hour in her relations with science, did not reject the idea that truths about the natural world could be known through reason, observation, and experiment. Nor did she assert that genuine scientific proofs must give way before literal interpretations of the Bible.⁶⁸

65. Midgley, *Evolution as a Religion*, 112–14.

66. John Polkinghorne, *Faith, Science and Understanding* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 23.

67. Edward J. Larson, *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America’s Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997).

68. Stephen M. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith* (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2003), 8.

One of the problems, from the viewpoint of the Catholic Church, was that the evidence did not seem sufficient to them to establish Galileo's claims. Even Cardinal Bellarmine, the head of the Roman Inquisition itself, was open to the possibility that Copernicus and Galileo were substantially right. Writing to a friend of Galileo's by the name of Paolo Foscarini, he said:

If there were a real proof that the Sun is in the center of the universe . . . and that the Sun does not go round the Earth but the Earth round the Sun, then we should have to proceed with great circumspection in explaining passages of Scripture which appear to teach the contrary, and rather admit that we did not understand them than declare an opinion to be false which is proved to be true. But, as for myself, I shall not believe that there are such proofs until they are shown to me.⁶⁹

“As a matter of fact,” comments Barr, “such a ‘real proof’ was not possible in Galileo's and Bellarmine's time. (Galileo believed he had such proofs, but in fact his proofs were wrong.)”⁷⁰ And, of course, the Copernican system that Galileo advocated so strenuously and at such personal cost had its own problems. It did not, for example, adequately account for the observed, empirical data with respect to planetary movements. That, and not religious dogmatism, explains the fact that the illustrious Danish astronomer Tycho Brahe went to his grave in 1601—nearly sixty years after Copernicus's own death—rejecting the Copernican theory of the solar system. It was only when Johannes Kepler (1571–1630) proposed that the planets moved in elliptical rather than circular orbits that the heliocentric view of the solar system, now better matched to the empirical data gathered by hundreds of astronomers over thousands of years, gained undisputed ascendancy.

While in retrospect it is plain (to say the least of it) that they were wrong, the leaders of the Roman Catholic Church were not without justification in the science of their day for resisting Galileo and

69. As cited in Santillana, *Crime of Galileo*, 99–100.

70. Barr, *Modern Physics and Ancient Faith*, 8.

Copernicus. So, too, Latter-day Saints should not jettison their faith without sound reason for doing so. But Thomas Murphy has not provided such reason, and it is far from clear that either Murphy or any other agitator on the subject of Amerindian DNA versus the Book of Mormon is going to march on triumphantly to victory in the way that Galileo and Copernicus eventually did.

“Whatever else can be said about this lamentable episode,” continues Barr,

the following is true: the condemnation of Galileo, rather than typifying the church’s attitude toward science, was manifestly an anomaly. For while the Catholic Church has never been afraid to condemn *theological* propositions—in its long history it has anathematized many hundreds of them—only in the single instance of Galileo did the Catholic Church venture to condemn a scientific theory. And even in that case it refrained from doing so in its most solemn and formal way, which would have been irrevocable.⁷¹

So how should we respond to the claim that DNA research confronts Latter-day Saints as a “Galileo event”? As we’ve seen, it is a gross oversimplification to claim that the Roman Catholic Church was antiscientific, even in the days of Galileo.⁷² But there is certainly no Latter-day Saint analogue to the Inquisition or to the *Index libro-*

71. Ibid. For more on the case of Galileo—which, it seems, actually grew out of a power struggle involving the Jesuits at least as much as out of scientific disputes (since many of the more scientifically minded clergy were already leaning toward a heliocentric conception of the solar system)—see Jerome J. Langford, *Galileo, Science, and the Church* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1971); William R. Shea and Mariano Artigas, *Galileo in Rome: The Rise and Fall of a Troublesome Genius* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and de Santillana, *Crime of Galileo*, as well as the appended brief essay, by historian of science Glen M. Cooper, immediately following this introduction.

72. In fact, as the work of Pierre Duhem and Stanley L. Jaki has demonstrated, there is strong reason to believe that, in a very important way, modern science owes its origin to Christianity and, more broadly, to what I like to term “the Abrahamic tradition.” Rodney Stark, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003), continues this theme, although, in my opinion, it unjustly denigrates the contribution of Islam to the rise of science.

rum prohibitorum, the “index of prohibited books” that once featured some of Galileo’s writing. Are Latter-day Saints afraid of, or threatened by, DNA studies? No. Absolutely not. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints is also not “antiscience.” (The situation is quite the opposite, in fact. Latter-day Saints seem, historically, to be disproportionately attracted to careers in the sciences.)⁷³

The most important thing to bear in mind is that if it is true, as serious scholarship on the Book of Mormon has contended for decades, that Lehi and his party (and the other migrations mentioned in the text) were but small groups, living, after their arrival, in a limited geographical area surrounded by others, scientific theories about the original peopling of the Americas are irrelevant to the truth claims of the Book of Mormon. An original settling of the New World by Asiatic peoples no more bars the landing of a small group of Semites in the sixth century B.C. than it prohibits the arrival of a small group of Scandinavians, my ancestors, in the nineteenth century A.D. (In fact, what with United States immigration laws, my ancestors may have had more trouble disembarking than Lehi did.)

In his important 1985 book *An Ancient American Setting for the Book of Mormon*, John Sorenson proposed reading the Book of Mormon as a “lineage history,” a document focused on a particular kinship group and providing only a partial view of the overall regional history as filtered through the specific interests and concerns of those

73. See E. L. Thorndike, “The Production, Retention and Attraction of American Men of Science,” *Science* 92 (16 August 1940): 137–41; Kenneth R. Hardy, “Social Origins of American Scientists and Scholars,” *Science* 185 (9 August 1974): 497–506; Robert L. Miller, “Science and Scientists,” in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, 3:1272–75. Some other examples of prominent Latter-day Saint scientists include: Orson Pratt, mathematician and astronomer (3:1114–15); James E. Talmage, geologist; John A. Widtsoe and Henry Eyring, chemists; Joseph F. Merrill and Willard Gardner, physicists; Harvey Fletcher, developer of stereophonic sound, the telephone speaker system, the transistor, and the Millikan oil-drop experiment measuring the charge of electrons; Philo T. Farnsworth, inventor of television; “Dinosaur Jim” Jensen, paleontologist and discoverer of the bones of the two largest dinosaurs yet found; James Fletcher, aeronautics engineer, called out of retirement to assume leadership of NASA following the *Challenger* explosion; Don Lind, astronaut; Russell M. Nelson, pioneer of open-heart surgery and heart valve repair; and Richard G. Scott, nuclear engineer.

who wrote it.⁷⁴ This is an extraordinarily useful insight, and once one begins to read the Book of Mormon with it in mind, it becomes obvious that Sorenson is correct. Why does the text not give us the name of “the brother of Jared,” who seems, in many respects, more important than Jared himself? Probably because the book of Ether is based on records kept by the descendants of Jared. (Ether himself was a descendant of Jared; see Ether 1:6–32.) And why, although he is clearly one of the greatest of the Lehiite prophets, do we know nothing about the life of Samuel the Lamanite before he comes to the Nephite city of Zarahemla? Probably for the same reason that we know nothing about him after he leaps from the city wall and returns to prophesy among his own people: the Book of Mormon is a Nephite lineage history. Samuel almost certainly preached and prophesied before he stood on that Nephite wall and almost certainly continued to preach and prophesy thereafter, but the Book of Mormon is interested in him only insofar as he impinges upon the Nephites (see Helaman 13:1–16:8). Similarly, the Book of Mormon presents us with far too little material to form any connected idea of Lamanite history, even for relatively brief periods. Why? Because it tells us about the Lamanites only to the extent that doing so is relevant to telling a Nephite story.

Some have claimed that those who advocate a limited geography for the Book of Mormon—that is, who argue that the Jaredites, Lehiites, and Mulekites were not alone in the Americas—are fighting a desperate rear-guard action against the advance of archaeology and, now, of biological science.⁷⁵ These critics’ marked irritation with contemporary defenders of the Book of Mormon, which often extends beyond these and other particular issues to the entire enterprise most prominently represented by the Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, is reminiscent of “the contempt, and even disgust” that, C. S. Lewis noted, are “felt by many people for the writings of modern Christians.” When a per-

74. See particularly Sorenson, *Ancient American Setting*, 50–56.

75. That this is not at all the case is demonstrated by Matthew Roper, “Nephi’s Neighbors: Book of Mormon Peoples and Pre-Columbian Populations,” in this number, pages 91–128, and by Sorenson and Roper, “Before DNA,” 6–23.

son is convinced that the overall worldview of Christianity is objectionable and transparently absurd, said Lewis,

he naturally listens with impatience to our solutions of particular difficulties and our defences against particular objections. The more ingenious we are in such solutions and defences the more perverse we seem to him. “Of course,” he says, “once the doctrines are there, clever people can invent clever arguments to defend them.”⁷⁶

Lewis spoke of “the impatient sceptic, . . . fore-armed against anything I may say” not so much by particular opposing facts as by a fundamentally opposed worldview.

“I know exactly what this man is going to do,” he murmurs. “He is going to start explaining all these mythological statements away. It is the invariable practice of these Christians. On any matter whereon science has not yet spoken and on which they cannot be checked, they will tell you some preposterous fairytale. And then, the moment science makes a new advance and shows (as it invariably does) their statement to be untrue, they suddenly turn round and explain that they didn’t mean what they said, that they were using a poetic metaphor or constructing an allegory, and that all they really intended was some harmless moral platitude. We are sick of this theological thimble-rigging.”⁷⁷

It is interesting to note, however, that even the manner of the original settlement of the Americas is still very much in dispute.⁷⁸ Those who imagine that current DNA science proves the Book of Mormon false, or even that it presents us with a clear and undisputed understanding of

76. Lewis, *Miracles*, 109.

77. *Ibid.*, 110.

78. Tom D. Dillehay, “Tracking the First Americans,” *Nature*, 4 September 2003, 23–24, offers a representative snapshot of a rapidly changing scene, though there is much more to be said on many fronts.

the original paleoamerican immigrations, have been, I think, strikingly simplistic in their views. “Slowly,” says the University of Kentucky’s Tom Dillehay in a recent issue of *Nature*, “we are realizing that the ancestry of the Americas is as complex and as difficult to trace as that of other human lineages around the world.”⁷⁹ With the field of research so very fluid, new facts and new questions are emerging at a rapid pace. The January 2004 issue of *Discover*, for example, reports:

The most plausible explanation of how humans first settled the Americas—Ice Age hunters pursuing game walked from Siberia to Alaska over a land bridge—has gained wide acceptance in recent years, although scientific evidence has been thin at best. In 2003, it got thinner.⁸⁰

Why? At least two new problems surfaced during the year. First, spear points and tools found at Ushki Lake, along the Kamchatka River in Siberia, have been redated. Nikolai Dikov, the archaeologist who excavated the site in 1964, had dated the artifacts to about 14,300 years before the present (B.P.). Theorists of the settling of the Americas hailed his discovery, saying that it represented proof of the route along which those Ice Age hunters had traveled. Dikov’s date allowed ample time—2,800 years—for descendants of the Ushki people to reach Clovis, New Mexico, where the oldest archaeological site in North America yielding reliably dated tools and artifacts reveals a human presence at least as early as 11,500 years B.P. Still sure of the significance of the finds there, American archaeologists reexamined the Ushki Lake area in 2001, uncovering primitive tools interspersed with charcoal in an ancient fire pit. The problem that emerged, however, is that the charcoal can be radiocarbon-dated to 11,000 years B.P., thus seeming to make the Ushki site younger than or, at best, contemporary with the Clovis settlement. So the movement of peoples up through what is now northeastern Russia or Siberia, across to

79. *Ibid.*, 24.

80. Michael W. Robbins and Jeffrey Winters, “Land Bridge Theory Tested,” *Discover*, January 2004, 32.

Alaska, and down through Canada and the Pacific Northwest to New Mexico still lacks archaeological support.

Second, Rolando González-José, an anthropologist at the University of Barcelona, has been meticulously studying thirty-three skulls found in Baja California whose age ranges from between 300 to 2,700 years. Surprisingly, they resemble neither the skulls of prehistoric northeastern Asians (the people who are supposed to have come across the land bridge) nor those of modern Native Americans. Instead, they seem most like the skulls of early inhabitants of *southeast Asia*. González-José suggests, on the basis of his work, that ancient southeast Asians may have traveled to the Americas by boat prior to the Clovis era. Tom Dillehay, on the other hand, remains unconvinced. The anomalous shape of the Baja skulls, he says, “may indicate some genetic drift, or they could link to some parallel adaptations, or perhaps they resulted from inbreeding with other local populations.”

In the meantime, reports *Discover*, “the land bridge theory is not dead.” Michael Waters, an anthropologist from Texas A&M University and a participant in studies of the new finds from Ushki Lake, “still has faith in the hypothesis because there is so much territory left to excavate. ‘Siberia is a big place,’ he says, ‘and very few archaeologists are working there.’”⁸¹

Fair enough. But Professor Waters’s profession of faith is the kind of statement that draws howls of derision when made by believers in the Book of Mormon. Turning the common archaeological axiom on its head, critics often insist that absence of evidence somehow *is* evidence of absence. To think otherwise, they commonly declare, is to turn one’s back on rationality and science.

Nevertheless, the claim that DNA research represents a “Galileo event” for members of the restored Church of Jesus Christ may well be true—though not in the sense intended and fantasized by those who have trumpeted it as such to the all-too-willing, gullible, and uninformed representatives of the news media who have obligingly given it global coverage.

81. *Ibid.*

Like Brent Metcalfe, but for entirely different reasons, I rather hope it is.

We need to understand the original “Galileo event” accurately. Propagandistic accounts of the Inquisition and of other events along the interface of religion and science—accounts carefully crafted, in many cases, to gain advantage for enemies of religious faith in a tacit cultural war—should not be accepted at face value. Galileo’s scientific achievements did not challenge the Christian faith. Nothing in his discovery of the moons of Jupiter or sunspots, nothing in the Copernican model of the solar system that he championed, conflicted with belief in a loving, personal God, in a resurrected and saving Christ, or in the hope of salvation conferred by Christian faith. Galileo’s science conflicted, instead, with older scientific theories—pagan Greek, not Christian, in origin—that had become so established in the minds of many influential thinkers in his day that they could not distinguish between the gospel of Jesus Christ and popular scientific assumptions. Evangelical authors Jimmy Davis and Harry Poe are entirely correct when they observe that “Galileo ran afoul of academic authorities, not because his science contradicted the Bible but because it contradicted Aristotle!”⁸² The existence of sunspots did not conflict with belief in the atonement; sunspots conflicted with the Greek notion that all coming-to-be and ceasing-to-be—all decay, corruption, and imperfection—were restricted to the sublunary world and that the cosmos beyond the orbit of the moon was perfect in every way. Stripping away such gospel-foreign presumptions was good. It was an example of the power of science to sharpen and make more accurate our understanding of the world around us.

If DNA research demonstrates that the hemispheric or global theory of the Book of Mormon—according to which every pre-Columbian Amerindian from the Bering Strait to Patagonia and from Hudson’s Bay to the Amazon was a pure descendant of the Lehighites and the Lehighites alone—is untenable, that too is good. It

82. Jimmy H. Davis and Harry L. Poe, *Designer Universe: Intelligent Design and the Existence of God* (Nashville: Broadman and Holman, 2002), 42–43.

will serve to illustrate the power of science to assist solid earlier scholarship in sharpening and making more accurate our understanding of the world around us, in somewhat the same way that continuing revelation helps to clarify our understanding of the truths of the gospel. Such a demonstration will conflict with no essential doctrine of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. It will not only be consistent with but will be supportive of careful readings of the Book of Mormon that have been available for many decades. It will merely eliminate popular assumptions—sincerely held, well-intended, but external and foreign to the scriptural text—that had attached themselves to the Book of Mormon in much the same parasitical and distorting way that Aristotelian and Ptolemaic cosmology had earlier attached itself to the Bible. Serious scholarship on the Book of Mormon had already long been arguing for a limited geographical view of Jaredite and Nephite history and for regarding the migrations described in the record as limited and quite modest incursions of small numbers of people into larger, preexisting populations. DNA research does not negate the conclusions of such scholars; it strengthens them.

It would be a foolish mistake, in this case, for those who discover that the global or hemispheric model of Book of Mormon geography and peoples is incorrect, to reject the entire volume of scripture rather than to conclude that the hemispheric model rests on a hasty and incorrect interpretation of the text. When throwing out error, we should be careful to retain the truth. (To borrow a familiar phrase, we must be careful not to throw the baby out with the bathwater.) Children who learn that Santa Claus is merely a nursery tale, and that reindeer can't really fly, would lose inestimably much were they to throw out not just the jolly old elf but the entire Christmas story and, with it, the One whose birth that story commemorates.

Five essays in the present number of the *Review* respond, in general terms or specifically, to the issue of Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon. Ideally, they should be read in connection with

the four related articles in the recently published *Journal of Book of Mormon Studies* 12/1 (2003).⁸³

Other essays in the present *Review* can likewise be viewed as responses to what I have termed “hype” and “suppression.” Will Bagley’s *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, for example, has received media attention and kudos out of all proportion to its merit as history and on the basis of little or no significant new evidence.⁸⁴ In their highly critical review of *Blood of the Prophets* published in a recent number of *Mormon Historical Studies*, W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall—respectively a professor of history at Southern Virginia University and an experienced independent researcher based in Utah Valley—acknowledge that the book has some good qualities, but find those seriously outweighed by its defects.⁸⁵

Bagley’s research is extensive and takes advantage of sources not known to Juanita Brooks. His handling of those sources, however, is problematic and at times is manipulated to fit his thesis, and both his prejudices and biases quickly become apparent. Bagley is intent upon implicating Brigham Young in the massacre. To do so, he repaints nineteenth-century Utah with blood. . . .

Bagley is a superb storyteller. Yet the manner in which he constructs his story is designed to reinforce the notion that nineteenth-century Utah was a corrupt cauldron of blood, vice, and hypocrisy. Bagley’s prejudices and unexamined assumptions permeate the narrative. In countless places, Bagley labels Mormons and anyone with a kind word for them as ridiculous or worthy of dismissal.⁸⁶

83. Sorenson and Roper, “Before DNA”; Whiting, “DNA and the Book of Mormon”; Butler, “A Few Thoughts”; and Meldrum and Stephens, “Who Are the Children of Lehi?”

84. Will Bagley, *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2002).

85. W. Paul Reeve and Ardis E. Parshall, review of *Blood of the Prophets: Brigham Young and the Massacre at Mountain Meadows*, by Will Bagley, *Mormon Historical Studies* 4/1 (2003): 149–57.

86. *Ibid.*, 150.

“In some cases,” they say, “Bagley substitutes unsubstantiated gossip for evidence.”⁸⁷ They excoriate him, moreover, for his “manipulation of information” and for announcing conclusions that “go well beyond his evidence.” Worse, at a very crucial point in his argument, Bagley has misrepresented the contents of a vital document, an inexcusable act that Reeve and Parshall identify as “a direct violation of the American Historical Association’s Statement on Standards of Professional Conduct.”⁸⁸ “Perhaps the real message in *Blood of the Prophets*,” they suggest,

is that considering Bagley’s extensive research, he could come up with no better evidence than Dimick Huntington’s journal to link “Young to facilitating the murders.” And to make even that unsustainable claim, he had to put a new word into Huntington’s pen.⁸⁹

“Even though Bagley claims to be aware of ‘the basic rules of the craft of history,’” Reeve and Parshall report, “he consistently violates them in *Blood of the Prophets*. As a result, Juanita Brooks’ *The Mountain Meadows Massacre* remains the most definitive and balanced account to date.”⁹⁰

In this number of the *FARMS Review*, Will Bagley’s case for the prosecution of Brigham Young continues to falter when subjected to rigorous historical and legal analysis by Robert D. Crockett.

Similarly, Grant Palmer’s book, *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*, has been ceded a measure of undeserved authority by some readers, not because it presents much that is truly new, but because of its author’s claimed status as, precisely, an “insider,” a faithful member of the Church and long-term veteran of the Church Educational System,

87. *Ibid.*, 154.

88. *Ibid.*, 152. On Bagley’s truly spectacular distortion of a piece of evidence that is fundamental to his argument, see also Lawrence Coates’s review of *Blood of the Prophets*, by Will Bagley, *BYU Studies* 41/1 (2003): 153–58. Two other valuable reviews of Bagley’s book, by Paul H. Peterson and Thomas G. Alexander, accompany that of Coates in the same number of *BYU Studies*, at pp. 159–66 and 167–74, respectively.

89. Reeve and Parshall, review of *Blood of the Prophets*, 156.

90. *Ibid.*, 149.

whose honest historical writing can be faulted for no bias except, perhaps, a nostalgic prejudice in favor of traditional Latter-day Saint understandings. Its negative conclusions, accordingly, are thought to carry all the more punch. An official statement issued on 28 January 2004 by the Joseph Fielding Smith Institute for Latter-day Saint History at Brigham Young University rejects any suggestion that Grant Palmer speaks for them or reflects their position.⁹¹ Davis Bitton, Steven Harper, and Mark Ashurst-McGee, moreover, demonstrate that Palmer's book rests on a highly selective use of sources, indicating that Palmer either did not know the literature he claims to be representing or else that he chose, for reasons best explained by him, to suppress mention of significant portions of it. Further, Ashurst-McGee and Louis Midgley illustrate Palmer's appalling distortion of perhaps his most striking and "original" piece of evidence. I enthusiastically endorse Ashurst-McGee's encouragement of any who may be interested in the claims advanced by the fifth chapter of Palmer's book, entitled "Moroni and the Golden Pot," to obtain a copy of Hoffmann's story and to read it for themselves.⁹² It is simply inconceivable to me that anyone who has actually read "The Golden Pot" can seriously believe it to have been a source or even an inspiration for Joseph Smith's account of his experiences with Moroni. On the other hand, I am virtually certain that Palmer's interest in this bizarre story was originally inspired by the salamandrine tales of Mark Hofmann. Professor Midgley also shows that Palmer's CES career and the orthodoxy that it ought to imply have been hyped out of all proportion to reality and that, unfortunately, Palmer's relatively recent retirement from employment by the church does not demonstrate that he abandoned his orthodox Latter-day Saint beliefs only recently.⁹³

91. That brief statement is included here in this number, page 255.

92. E. T. A. Hoffmann's hypercomplicated and deeply odd fantasy tale *The Golden Pot* (*Der goldne Topf* [1814]) is easily available, in the 1827 English translation by Thomas Carlyle, in a one-dollar Dover Thrift Edition: E. T. A. Hoffmann, *The Nutcracker and the Golden Pot* (New York: Dover, 1993). An online version of "The Golden Pot" can be found at www.blackmask.com/books72c/goldpot.htm (accessed 13 January 2004).

93. "I am not what I am," says Shakespeare's villainous Iago to himself (*Othello* 1.1.65) as he undertakes a campaign of cleverly selected and planted evidence, deception, and insinuations designed to destroy Othello's faith in his innocent, pure wife, Desdemona.

Palmer attempts to convince his readers that the foundational events of Mormonism did not literally occur in the world of physical reality and that Latter-day Saint history has been systematically falsified in order to make it seem that they did. For instance, Palmer alleges that the familiar accounts of priesthood restoration by angelic ministers were cobbled together by Joseph Smith in order to fend off challenges to his leadership in Kirtland, Ohio, during late 1834 and early 1835.⁹⁴ The first unclear reference to angelic involvement, Palmer says, can be dated to November 1832, but it is not until February 1835 that Peter, James, and John are identified as having bestowed authority upon Joseph Smith and Oliver Cowdery. In order to bolster his case, Palmer relies heavily upon late reminiscences, a reliance that leaves one deeply puzzled regarding his principle of selection. He fails, for example, to mention Parley Pratt's first encounter with Hyrum Smith, in Palmyra, New York, during late August of 1830. Hyrum, Pratt recalls, told him of "the commission of his brother Joseph, and others, by revelation and the ministering of angels, by which the apostleship and authority had been again restored to the earth."⁹⁵ (As Palmer himself notes, on pages 219–20 of his book, the terms *elder* and *apostle* were used almost interchangeably in those earliest days of church history, so that Pratt's summary seems to point quite unequivocally to a discussion *in 1830* of the restoration of the Melchizedek Priesthood by angels.)

Nor, oddly, does Palmer mention Philo Dibble's memory of Joseph Smith standing up in a meeting in a barn on Sunday, 8 July 1832—just after Sidney Rigdon had upset the Saints by suggesting that the keys of authority had been taken away from the church—and testifying: "No power can pluck those keys from me,

94. Grant H. Palmer, *An Insider's View of Mormon Origins* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 2002), 215–33. See Steven C. Harper's and Mark Ashurst-McGee's discussions of this claim in this number, pages 273–364, below.

95. *Autobiography of Parley P. Pratt* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1985), 22.

except the power that gave them to me; that was Peter, James, and John.”⁹⁶ These are not obscure sources. I ran across both of them by pure serendipity on a single recent Saturday morning while doing a bit of desultory reading entirely unrelated to either Grant Palmer or the restoration of the priesthood. One should be able to expect at least that level of research, it seems to me, from a revisionist book written by one who claims to be both an “insider” and a conscientious, truth-seeking historian.

At the same time he is systematically attempting to demolish the foundations of uniquely Mormon belief, however, Palmer exhorts us to place our faith in Jesus. But he seems to be operating by a double standard: arguments that are perfectly analogous to those that he marshals against the historic faith of the Latter-day Saints can be and have been mounted against fundamental Christian beliefs. In an argument eerily parallel to that of Palmer, for example, John Dominic Crossan claims that Jesus’ body was abandoned by his disciples and that it was dragged away by dogs and left to rot. The New Testament resurrection narratives, according to Crossan, represent no more than a relatively late attempt to put a positive spin on a very disheartening story. Moreover, he declares, those narratives were constructed in order to buttress one of numerous competing claims to authority in the young Christian movement.⁹⁷

Palmer likewise argues that the experiences of the witnesses to the Book of Mormon were merely subjective, purely mental, and,

96. Philo Dibble, “Philo Dibble’s Narrative,” in *Early Scenes in Church History*, Faith-Promoting Series 8, ed. George Q. Cannon (Salt Lake City: Juvenile Instructor Office, 1882), 80. I happen to have run across the Dibble reference in Jeffrey S. O’Driscoll, *Hyrum Smith: A Life of Integrity* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 2003), 68–69, while Palmer’s claim was freshly on my mind, but “Philo Dibble’s Narrative” is familiar to all serious historians of early Mormonism.

97. See, for example, John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1991); Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995); Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1998).

accordingly, that they are devoid of value as evidence for the existence of genuinely physical plates.⁹⁸ It was only considerably later, Palmer claims, that “the Church” transformed the dreamy, harmless, and insubstantial visions of Joseph’s naïve witnesses into real-world experiences. In a very similar vein, liberal and agnostic scholars of the early Christian movement have argued that the first disciples believed in a spiritual resurrection, not a physical one. Consequently, the postcrucifixion encounters of the apostles and others with the Risen Lord were nothing more than extraordinarily vivid (but otherwise subjective and rather commonplace) religious experiences, not genuine meetings with a person who had been bodily raised from the dead.⁹⁹

Is Palmer unaware that the simple faith in Jesus that he recommends as an alternative to long-held Latter-day Saint beliefs is vulnerable to the

98. Palmer, *An Insider’s View of Mormon Origins*, 175–213. Oddly, though, after more than twenty pages of insistence on the subjective and unreal character of what the witnesses “saw”—and perhaps himself aware of the striking weakness of his case—Palmer suddenly remembers that “believers and skeptics alike report that they physically hefted the box and handled something through a cloth” (ibid., 207) and abruptly suggests that Joseph Smith may have manufactured a fraudulent set of plates so as to deceive his gullible associates. Drawing on Dan Vogel’s opinion that, in Joseph Smith’s time and milieu, the “ancient mound builders and Jews were thought to have preserved their writings” by fastening plates together with rings at the back and placing them in stone boxes, Palmer hypothesizes that “these ideas may have been Joseph’s inspiration for making a plate-like object to persuade belief” (ibid.; Palmer paraphrases Vogel and credits Vogel’s *Indian Origins*). Palmer doesn’t trouble himself to explain why the witnesses’ belief, if it was anything like his portrayal of it—if nobody involved really thought that the things they reported “seeing” were actual physical objects—had to be persuaded or bolstered by fake artifacts. Nonetheless, Palmer’s behavior on this point is uncannily reminiscent of Vogel’s own. Throughout Dan Vogel’s essay “The Validity of the Witnesses’ Testimonies,” in *American Apocrypha*, 79–121, he claims that the experiences of the Three and the Eight Witnesses were merely “visionary” or “hallucinatory.” (In Vogel’s mind, the two terms are synonymous.) In a single sentence of his second-to-last paragraph, however—perhaps (to his credit) not fully persuaded by his own arguments—Vogel casually suggests that Joseph Smith might possibly have constructed a set of bogus tin plates in order to facilitate his alleged deception (Vogel, “Validity,” 108).

99. An accessible presentation of this position by a German New Testament scholar and atheist can be found in Paul Copan and Ronald Tacelli, eds., *Jesus’ Resurrection: Fact or Figment? A Debate between William Lane Craig and Gerd Lüdemann* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity, 2000).

same kinds of attacks he favors against Mormonism? Possibly not. Are his advisors and his handlers at Signature Books innocent of that fact? I doubt it very much.

Editor's Picks

And now we come to that part of the editor's introduction in which, based on my own readings in the books themselves and in the reviews, input from the other editors, the configuration of the planets, and a careful inspection of the flight patterns of migrating birds, I offer my picks of the books reviewed in this number. As I've noted before, the decision as to whether or not to recommend a book is quite firm; the consensus is always solid. How many asterisks to assign to each title, however, is a much more subjective matter. But we try to get things "right," hoping that these suggestions might be helpful to busy readers. Here, as always, is the scale that I use:

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

Of the books discussed in the present issue of the *FARMS Review*, we feel that we can recommend the following:

- **** Boyd Petersen, *Hugh Nibley: A Consecrated Life*
- **** Clark Pinnock, *Most Moved Mover: A Theology of God's Openness*
- ** Paul Y. Hoskisson, ed., *Historicity and the Latter-day Saint Scriptures*
- * Robert V. Remini, *Joseph Smith*

I am grateful to the many people who have made this issue of the *FARMS Review* possible. As always, we are primarily indebted to the reviewers, whose only compensation is a gratis copy of a book that they may or may not like. (And, if they happen already to have owned the book, not even that.) Without them, the rest of us would

have more time for solitaire and daytime television. My thanks go to Kevin Christensen, Steve Mayfield, Daniel B. McKinlay, and Cris Robinson for helping me with various questions. Duane E. Jeffery, of the Department of Integrative Biology at Brigham Young University, and G. Bruce Schaalje, of the BYU Department of Statistics, provided expert advice in response to specific articles. Noel B. Reynolds, executive director of Brigham Young University's Institute for the Study and Preservation of Ancient Religious Texts and of its FARMS subsidiary, and John M. Butler, at the National Institute of Standards and Technology, reviewed the DNA-related essays (Butler in his private capacity, it must be emphasized). Elizabeth W. Watkins, an editor in the publications department of the Institute, rendered impressive, energetic, and, indeed, indispensable service in helping to organize, solidify, and clarify our treatment of Amerindian DNA and the Book of Mormon, as well as assisting with the articles on Grant Palmer's book and furnishing me with some very useful materials. Alison V. P. Coutts, assistant director of the Institute and its director of publications, read through all the essays, offering valuable comments, as did the *Review's* two dedicated associate editors, Louis C. Midgley and George L. Mitton. And, once again, Shirley S. Ricks, the *Review's* founding and continuing production editor, was a helpful fellow reader, beyond preparing the whole thing for press with her characteristic competence, insight, organization, and reliability. Angela Barrionuevo, Emily Ellsworth, Ellen Henneman, Paula Hicken, Jennifer Messick, Deborah Peterson, Linda Sheffield, David Solarzano, and Sandra Thorne assisted in various tasks, and Jacob Rawlins and Jeremy R. Bird typeset the *Review*.

