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The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology 1644-1844
by John L. Brooke

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Book Reviews

JOHN L. BROOKE. *The Refiner's Fire: The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 1644-1844*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994. xix; 421 pp. Illustrations, maps, appendix, index. \$34.95.

Reviewed by William J. Hamblin, Associate Professor of History at Brigham Young University; Daniel C. Peterson, Associate Professor of Asian and Near Eastern Languages at Brigham Young University; and George L. Mitton, retired now from a career in education and public administration.¹

John L. Brooke, an associate professor of history at Tufts University, is, by his own description, “not a Mormon historian” (xvi); his earlier work has centered on the eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century social history of Massachusetts and New England. His new book does not claim to be “necessarily a well-rounded approach to early Mormonism” (xvii) or “a balanced history” (xvii), but is rather a “selective reinterpretation” (xvi) which is conceptually allied to D. Michael Quinn’s *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (xvii). Brooke acknowledges that he “share[s] some of the agnostic skepticism of Fawn Brodie” (xiv), and this position is clearly manifest throughout his book. But his claim that his “study is not intended to advance a cause or a polemic” (xiv) rings rather hollow in light of his frequent denunciations of LDS Church doctrines, policies, and activities.

The central thesis of *Refiner's Fire* is that “there are striking parallels between the Mormon concepts of the coequality of matter and spirit, of the covenant of celestial marriage, and of an ultimate goal of human godhood and the philosophical traditions of alchemy and hermeticism, drawn from the ancient world and fused with Christianity in the Italian Renaissance” (xiii). Brooke maintains that

[Joseph] Smith’s Mormon cosmology is best understood when situated on an intellectual and theological *conjunction* that reaches back not simply to a disorderly antebellum democracy or even to

early New England but to the extreme perfectionism forged in the Radical Reformation [of sixteenth century Europe] from the fusion of Christianity with the ancient occult hermetic philosophy. (xvi)

Indeed, typical secularist environmental explanations for the origin of the Church “cannot explain the theologically distinct message of the Mormon church” (xvi). Rather, it is “hermeticism [that] explains the more exotic features of the inner logic of Mormon theology” (xvii). While we quite agree with Brooke on the failure of environmentalist models to adequately explain the origins of the Church, we find Brooke’s counter explanation even more unsatisfactory.

Refiner’s Fire is divided into twelve chapters totaling some three hundred pages. Brooke first presents a brief summary of the origins of hermeticism and alchemy and the possible influence of those ideas on various groups of the Radical Reformation (3–29). He then attempts to demonstrate how some of these ideas made their way to North America in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (30–58). His third chapter focuses on the ancestors of some early Mormons and their (usually very tenuous) ties to various occultists and radical religious groups in eighteenth-century New England (59–88). His basic thesis here is that the family background of some early Mormon converts represents “predispositions of prepared peoples, traditions and predispositions shaped in great measure by familial connections and oral culture” (91). Apparently, since there is no hard textual evidence of hermetic connections, Brooke assumes oral transmission of those ideas.

He then presents a range of groups or ideas that existed in the United States around 1800 and that, he claims, *could* have influenced Joseph Smith and other early Mormons. These influences include hermeticism, alchemy, Freemasonry, Swedenborgianism, Mesmerism, Rosicrucianism, and the speculations of Luman Walter, the magician (91–104). Chapter five, “Alchymical Experiments,” focuses on treasure “divining, alchemy, and counterfeiting” which “formed a hermetic triad in popular culture” (121). The connection is that each was a different avenue to “the search for easy wealth” (128) through finding buried treasure, transmuting base metals into gold, or counterfeiting coins and bills.

In chapter six, Brooke attempts to associate Joseph Smith's immediate ancestors with mining, alchemy, treasure divining, Freemasonry, and counterfeiting (129-46). Brooke's book is thus half over before he discusses Joseph's first vision. In chapter seven, Brooke attempts to find hermeticism, Freemasonry, and alchemy in the translation process and text of the Book of Mormon (149-83). Although chronologically presented, the subsequent chapters do not offer a coherent history of early Mormonism. Rather, Brooke searches for any and every thought or act of Joseph Smith and other early Mormons that can possibly be seen as related—however vaguely—to hermetic, Masonic, alchemical, or other occultic ideas. Brooke first focuses on ideas of priesthood, mysteries, temples, cosmology, and preexistence (184-212). Joseph's marriage, sex life, and plural marriages are seen as “replicat[ing] the hermetic concept of divinization through the *coniunctio*, the alchemical marriage” (214, compare 212-18). The Kirtland Bank crisis is seen as quasi counterfeiting, which is therefore quasi alchemy—creating gold out of nothing—all of which is said to somehow demonstrate that Joseph was a hermeticist (222-32).

Brooke then focuses on the Nauvoo period, baptism for the dead, and the temple endowment. For him, the temple endowment is the ultimate manifestation of hermetic influences on Joseph, allegedly representing a fundamental departure from the biblical primitivism of the Book of Mormon and early Mormonism. All of these supposed hermetic practices culminate in Joseph's reformulation of “the dual gendered divinity that lay at the heart of the hermetic theology,” which is the supposed Mormon “androgynous God” (258, compare 235-61). Polygamy, the Kingdom of God, the murder of Joseph, and the fall of Nauvoo are the focus of chapter eleven (262-77), with another healthy dose of alleged counterfeiting (269-74).

In the final chapter, “Let Mysteries Alone” (278-305), Brooke attempts to demonstrate that Joseph's original hermetic Mormonism was systematically dismantled by Brigham Young and other later prophets, who “deemphasiz[ed] the distinct doctrines of the church” (305) such as blood atonement, polygamy, the gifts of the Spirit, and Adam-God. Temple ordinances were neglected to the point where, Brooke claims, “only the dead who

had died outside the faith explicitly required the saving powers of temple ordinance” (292). This shift in focus allegedly results in the modern authoritarian Church, which “may well soon become essentially indistinguishable from conservative Christian fundamentalism” (282) and which has recently clashed with dissenting intellectuals who have “advanced a hermetic interpretation of Mormon cosmology, most centrally the hermetic thesis of a dual-gendered divinity” (305). Brooke concludes with his advice that Mormonism would do well to return to its hermetic origins (302–5).

In part, Brooke is simply taking the basic thesis of Quinn’s *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* and attempting to extend the range of alleged occult influences on Mormonism backward in time and space. This attempt simply belabors the obvious: the alchemical and occult ideas found in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century America undeniably had antecedents in Europe. But, indeed, why should we stop at the Renaissance? Why not take hermeticism and alchemy back to their origins in Hellenistic Egypt? (The subtitle could then read: “The Making of Mormon Cosmology, 44 B.C. to A.D. 1844.”) The real question, of course, is whether or not such ideas had any formative influence on Joseph Smith and early Mormonism. Here Brooke has utterly failed to make his case.

A fundamental flaw in *Refiner’s Fire* is the author’s failure to define his key terms, especially *magic*, *hermeticism*, and *alchemy*. Magic in particular is seen by many modern scholars as a highly problematic concept that has yet to receive a universally accepted scholarly definition. (Some, indeed, feel that *magic* should be altogether abandoned in academic discourse.) The basic problem is the lack of firm boundaries between magical activities and beliefs and religious activities and beliefs. From this perspective, the term *magic* is simply a subjective and generally pejorative word used to describe unpopular forms of religious expression. Brooke makes no serious attempt to define the term, let alone to deal with the intricacies of its meaning.

A careful reading of *Refiner’s Fire* does, however, reveal an implied definition. For Brooke, “the role of magicians [is] manipulating and coercing supernatural forces” (xiv), and “magical practice of any sort [is] an effort to manipulate the spiritual, invisible

world” (7). But this crudely Frazerian approach—magic is coercive, while religion is supplicative—has been rejected by most anthropologists and historians of “magic” for decades, since it fails to do justice to the often interchangeable phenomena of religion and “magic” in the real world. Brooke himself will illustrate the point: “Mormon priests of the restored Melchizedek order,” he tells us, “were to have miraculous powers analogous to white magic. They could withstand poisons, make the blind see, the dumb speak, and the deaf hear; they were to ‘heal the sick’ and to ‘cast out devils’” (72, alluding to D&C 84:65–72). Not only does Brooke here ignore the biblical antecedent to this passage in Mark 16, but, more importantly, he fails to explain why these powers, which all Christians would recognize as religious, are suddenly “white magic” when claimed by the Mormons. Before Brooke can expect anyone to entertain his assertion that Mormon priesthood is magical, he must define precisely what *magic* is and demonstrate how Mormon priesthood is uniquely, or even partially, magical.

Brooke likewise makes no attempt to define a second key term, *hermeticism*. Technically, hermeticism describes a set of ideas that are based on, or strongly influenced by, the *Corpus Hermeticum*, a body of pseudepigraphic writings supposedly authored by “Hermes Trismegistus.” This group of documents originated in Hellenistic Egypt but was made available to Renaissance scholars only in the late fifteenth century.² Brooke makes no pretense of following this technical definition, admitting that Joseph “did not have a copy of the *Corpus Hermeticum* at hand” (204) and therefore was not technically a hermeticist. His usage implies a definition that is much looser, even metaphorical.

Brooke’s use of the term *alchemy* is equally problematic. Here again he openly abandons the technical definition in favor of a metaphorical one. “If we widen our definition of alchemy to include counterfeiting,” Brooke writes, “the ranks and the chronology of the alchemical tradition are extended mightily” (108). Of course, if we were to widen our definition of alchemy to include, say, cooking, “the ranks and the chronology of the alchemical tradition” would be extended even more spectacularly. But could such arbitrary redefinition be justified? Considering the implications of Brooke’s revisionist thesis both for believing

Latter-day Saints and for non-Mormon historians, we have every right to demand terminological precision and clarity.

Another weakness in Brooke's study is the utter lack of primary sources written by early Latter-day Saints that manifest any clear connection to alchemy, hermeticism, or magic. To test Brooke's propositions, we undertook a computer search of early LDS historical writings, including the so-called documentary *History of the Church*, the *Journal of Discourses*, *Times and Seasons*, *Messenger and Advocate*, *The Evening and Morning Star*, and the *Elder's Journal*.³ The terms *hermetic*, *hermeticism*, *hermetism*, *Pimander*, and *Trismegistus* never occur in any of these texts. The term *Hermes* occurs twice: once from Romans 16:14 and once apparently in reference to a Mormon "Elder Hermes."⁴ Neither has anything to do with Thrice-great Hermes of the hermetic tradition. *Alchemy* and *alchimy* do not occur. However, *alchymist* occurs twice: once referring to ordinary geologists and assayers, and, again, when Orson Pratt speaks of "alchymists [who] tried for generations to transmute the coarser materials into gold, and hundreds of individuals [who] have spent all their time in the pursuit of that vain phantom."⁵ Thus, the only mention of alchemy in this entire corpus is a negative one.

Cabala occurs once, when an Elder Ewald, on a mission to England, had a discussion with a rabbi who mentions cabala and the Sohar (*Zohar*).⁶ Elsewhere, John Taylor speaks metaphorically of things "mysterious or cabalistic."⁷ The word *occult* never occurs in any of these texts. *Magic* is more frequently mentioned, occurring twenty-two times, of which fifteen are figurative: "as if by magic" or "the magic wand of industry."⁸ Two references appear to identify props used in theatrical magic tricks or shows.⁹ The other five are uniformly negative.¹⁰ *Witch* occurs thirteen times, nine referring to the story of the witch of Endor in the Bible¹¹ and four referring, unfavorably, to the Salem witch trials.¹² *Sorcery* is never mentioned, while the one example of a sorcerer has reference to the Simon Magus account from Acts.¹³ Explicit positive references to the distinctively hermetic and alchemical ideas that Brooke maintains played an absolutely formative role in early Mormonism are noticeable in these early LDS texts only for their absence.

On the other hand, numerous texts and incidents from Mormon history indicate a basically negative attitude toward the occult on the part of early Mormons. The Book of Mormon and the Doctrine and Covenants, for instance, contain several explicit condemnations of sorcery, witchcraft, and magic. The Book of Mormon maintains that Christ “will cut off witchcrafts out of thy land” (3 Ne. 21:16), and sorcery, witchcraft, and “the magic art” are featured in lists of sins (Alma 1:32; Morm. 2:10) and attributed to “the power of the evil one” (Morm. 1:19). In the Doctrine and Covenants, sorcerers are among those who will be “cast down to hell” (D&C 76:103, 106) and who “shall have their part in . . . the second death” (D&C 63:17). These are the *only* references to magical or occult powers in LDS scripture, and they are uniformly and emphatically negative. Most of Brooke’s key terms, such as *alchemy*, *astrology*, *hermeticism*, *androgyny*, and *cabala*, are never mentioned in LDS scripture. Based on this extensive (but admittedly incomplete) survey of basic early Mormon writings, we can arrive at three plausible conclusions: first, the unique ideas that Brooke claims were central to the origins of Mormonism do not occur in early LDS primary texts; second, early Mormons seldom concerned themselves with things occult; but, third, on the infrequent occasions when they mention the occult, it is always viewed negatively.

Furthermore, the earliest LDS missionary journals available, *The Journals of William E. McLellin*, show that early Mormonism was deeply rooted in biblical texts and theology, rather than occultism. These extensive firsthand accounts of LDS teachings and religious experiences from 1831 to 1836 demonstrate that the message of the Restoration was to proclaim the revealed gospel of Jesus Christ, pure and simple. As one of the editors, Jan Shipps, notes in her introductory essay:

Many . . . expected—and some feared—that any contemporaneous documents in a collection of McLellin’s papers would be filled with information that would add to a perception of early Mormonism as a hotbed of occultism and hermetic hocus-pocus. Instead, what these narratives . . . depict is a struggling missionary band preaching not only a millennialist message that, to be sure, reflected the importance of the coming forth of the Book of Mormon as a signal that the end was near, but also a message whose true anchor was nonetheless the Christian scriptures.¹⁴

Brooke has not read Mormon scriptural texts with sufficient care. Many of his examples of alleged hermetic influence are plagued by tendentious misreadings of LDS texts and history, which undermine his thesis. For instance, according to Brooke the “lone Nephite survivor [was] Mormon” (159), which explains why “the [golden] plates were hidden by the hero Mormon for Joseph Smith to recover” (156). But this statement is not true, as even most superficial students of Mormonism can easily spot. And when discussing the well-worn, though somewhat dubious, distinction between “Iron Rod Saints and Liahona Saints,” Brooke derives the former symbol from “rods . . . given the Nephites in the *Book of Mormon*, by which God . . . pulled the rod holder to the Tree of Life” (296). But the Book of Mormon never describes God as using a rod to “pull” anybody anywhere.

Over and over again, Brooke misreads Latter-day Saint doctrines, and his misreadings fatally weaken the parallels he claims to find with hermeticism. For example, his insistence on an “androgynous,” “dual-gendered divinity” in Mormonism (28, 258, 283, 302, 305) fundamentally distorts Latter-day Saint doctrine on the subject. And, though Brooke consistently maintains that Joseph Smith thought he was establishing the “third dispensation” (xv, 3, 22, 45–46), Joseph spoke of the *seven* dispensations familiar to modern Latter-day Saints (though even this number should not be limited too rigidly).¹⁵ Furthermore, anyone aware of the Church’s teachings on suffering, mortality, and the estrangement from God that Mormons call spiritual death will be perplexed by Brooke’s claim that, in Mormon doctrine, “the consequences of Adam’s Fall did not extend to his seed” (260).

Unfortunately, Brooke’s understanding of contemporary Mormonism fares no better. Many endowed Latter-day Saints will no doubt be puzzled to learn that, since the early twentieth-century, “only the dead who had died outside the faith explicitly required the saving powers of temple ordinance” (292). Even the cold fusion claims made at the University of Utah a few years ago are pressed into service as illustrations of Mormon hermeticism: They are “interesting,” Brooke declares, “. . . given Mormon doctrines on the nature of matter” (299). He never troubles himself, though, to explain how the experiments of the non-Mormon

chemists Stanley Pons and Martin Fleischman are even remotely helpful as indicators of Latter-day Saint attitudes.

Brooke's presentation of early Mormon history is likewise marred by repeated blunders. Contrary to Brooke's claims, Joseph Smith never "announced in 1832 that he himself was the prophet Enoch" (166). Nor did he present "himself as the Nephite, the prophet of the coming Kingdom" (181). Nor did he ever claim that "rebuilding the temple of Nephi . . . would fulfill prophecy and advance the Second Coming" (198).

These are not minor errors involving marginal characters or events in LDS scripture and history; nor are they mere matters of interpretation. Rather, for the most part, they are fundamental errors, clearly demonstrating Brooke's faulty knowledge of primary Mormon texts. By analogy, if a biblical scholar were to discuss John's vision on the road to Damascus or Peter's revelation on the isle of Patmos, he would be laughed out of the American Academy of Religion; such work would certainly not be published by Cambridge University Press (even if only by its New York operation). It is a sad reflection on the state of knowledge of Mormonism among some non-Mormon scholars that errors of such magnitude could pass undetected or uncorrected in the writing, reviewing, and editing process of this book.

For his thesis to be established, Brooke must show not only that his alleged hermetic or alchemical ideas exist in Mormonism, but also that they are not paralleled in the Bible. Ignoring this principle, Brooke consistently downplays or ignores the obvious and explicit biblical antecedents of Mormon thought in favor of obscure and vague parallels to hermetic, alchemical, Masonic, and occult texts and ideas, which themselves often derive from the Bible. A few examples (from many) will demonstrate this problem.

- "Mormon baptism for the dead" is based on "spiritualist doctrine" (28) and on the "radical heritage" of "the German pietist mystics at Ephrata" (243). No mention whatsoever is made of 1 Corinthians 15:29 as the unquestionable source for this idea in all of these movements.
- "In word[s] . . . replicated in Mormon doctrine, the high priest in the Royal Arch [Masonry] was to be 'a priest forever after

the order of Melchizedec” (101). No mention is made of Psalms 110:4 or Hebrews 5:6 as the unquestionable sources for this precise quotation. Although he is elsewhere aware of Hebrews as the source for the Masonic material (194), Brooke still argues that Mormons took the idea from Masonry.

- Brooke informs us that “*The Pearl of Great Price*, the title of a collection of Smith’s writings from the 1830s, . . . had ancient mystical and alchemical connotations” (161). He overlooks Matthew 13:46, which is the obvious source for the title.
- Brooke would have us believe that the idea of “treasure in heaven” in the Book of Mormon is derived from “a theme that [Joseph’s] grandfather Solomon Mack had developed in his *Narrative*” (175, compare 176, 274). He seems unaware of its biblical parallels (for example, Matt. 6:20).
- “This idea of an earthly sealing [power],” says Brooke, “was first introduced in the *Book of Mormon*, when Nephi was granted powers of salvation and damnation: ‘Whatsoever ye shall seal on earth shall be sealed in heaven; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven’” (194, citing Hel. 10:7). He fails to mention Matthew 16:19, where the same power was granted to Christ’s apostles.
- “Emma Smith had long been called the ‘Elect Lady,’ a title in at least one branch of high-degree French Masonry that admitted women into special lodges” (247). Brooke not only gives no evidence that this branch of French Masonry was practiced in North America at the time of Joseph Smith (it wasn’t), but he ignores the words “elect lady” in 2 John 1:1.
- Brooke helpfully suggests that, “for a description of the biblical tabernacle and temple probably available to Smith,” readers should “see *The Genuine Works of Flavius Josephus* . . . (New York, 1821)” (376 n. 49). But Brooke has overlooked a far more convenient source—the Bible, in Exodus 25–36, 1 Kings 6–8, and 1 Chronicles 21–28.

Brooke’s failure to demonstrate the superiority of his hermetic model over biblical precedent is by no means his only methodological failure. Time and again, he asserts conclusions that

do not follow from the evidence and analysis he presents. His argument occasionally degenerates into the wildest of word associations. Susannah Goddard Howe, for example, was descended from a family that Brooke links with “occult warfare” in early eighteenth-century New England (67). Susannah Howe’s daughter married a Mormon, John Haven (uncle of Brigham Young), who remembered that she “believ[e]d that Jacob’s ladder was not yet broken and that angels still continued to ascend and descend” (70). Brooke therefore infers that “this seems to have been the residual influence of the bewitchment of the Goddards, apparently by Nat Smith, the Immortalist god,” and that her statement indicates that she was “convinced that spirit and matter were inseparably connected, the central tenet of the Mormon cosmology” (70). This whole line of reasoning he derives from a secondhand allusion to Genesis 28:10–15.

Much of Brooke’s argument rests on flimsy circumstantial evidence, especially tenuous genealogical and geographical relationships (25, 50–51, 59–60, 63, 70–71, 73, 95, 266, 270, 359). What significance is there, really, in the datum that the counterfeiter Joseph Bill was “a second cousin once removed of Samuel Bill, who would marry Joseph Smith’s aunt Lydia Mack in 1786” (108)? How many readers of this review can name, let alone have been deeply influenced by, a second cousin once removed of a maternal aunt’s husband? Brooke spends several pages (50–53) detailing the occultic religiosity of Joseph Stafford in the early 1700s and describing the “magical and medical” documents his family preserved from him after his death (51), only to admit, in passing (53), that it was a different branch of the family—his brother David’s descendants, who did not have those documents—with which the Smiths had contact a century afterwards.

On pages 214–16, Brooke proffers the existence of certain pseudo-Aristotelian sex manuals on the American frontier as evidence that Joseph Smith not only read them, but that they also influenced the plot of the Book of Mormon: the “white race of Nephites” are, he claims, linked to “the white male seed of *Aristotle’s Book of Problems*.” But, he confesses, “these links . . . can only be speculative” (216). Indeed.

The one point where Brooke's argument has any semblance of substance is in his claim that Joseph was a Mason and therefore could have been influenced by Masonic lore and symbolism. Repeating an old anti-Mormon claim, Brooke asserts that the source for the account of the discovery of the golden plates is the tale of Enoch's pillars in Royal Arch Freemasonry (157-59). In fact, the differences between the two accounts are far greater than the similarities. Enoch is not mentioned in connection with the coming forth of the Book of Mormon. The Enochian text is inscribed on a stone pillar, not on golden plates—the one gold plate in the Enoch story was large and triangular, not a book, and had only the ineffable name of God on it. Whereas the Book of Mormon is composed of history and sermons, Enoch's pillar contained "principles of the liberal arts, particularly of masonry." Brooke concludes that "Joseph Smith claim[ed] to find golden plates and Masonic artifacts in a stone vault atop the Hill Cumorah" (159). But Joseph most emphatically did not! Brooke alone puts these words in Joseph's mouth in order to make them seem similar to the Masonic sources he quotes.

Brooke maintains that "there is overwhelming evidence of the continuity between Masonic and Mormon [temple] symbolism" (249). In fact, we find the similarities are limited to a few motifs which are understood in quite different ways in the endowment and in Masonry. But neither Brooke nor any other environmentalist has ever attempted to account for these and other striking differences. For example, Webb's *Freemason's Monitor*—a source Brooke claims influenced Joseph—mentions a vast number of ideas and symbols that have absolutely no parallel in Mormonism: ashlar; Tuscan, Doric, Ionic, and Corinthian architectural styles; the five senses; the Royal Arch; the seven liberal arts and sciences; a sword pointing to a naked heart; the anchor; the forty-seventh problem of Euclid; the hourglass, scythe, chisel, and mallet; lodge; and Grand Master.¹⁶ If Joseph borrowed his ideas from Masonry, it seems odd that the similarities are limited to a few items, most of which have known parallels to more ancient mysteries. Likewise, considering Webb's citations and frequent use of quotations from many parts of the Bible in early Masonic ceremonies, should one presume with Brooke that Joseph was decisively influenced in the

development of the LDS temple creation drama by three verses from Genesis in a Masonic manual (249), verses that he had read many times in the Bible?

What, then, is the significance of alleged similarities between Masonry and LDS doctrine and the temple endowment? Does the idea that early Latter-day Saints might have borrowed and transformed a few symbols from the Masons explain Mormon origins anymore than the fact that early Christians borrowed the *crux ansata* from the pagan Egyptian *ankh* explains the origins of early Christianity? Symbols, like words, are readily transferred between cultures or religions. When this transference occurs, we usually find that although the symbols or words may be recognizably similar, their meaning in two cultures can be vastly different. (Contrast, for instance, the symbolic meaning of the swastika in the late twentieth century, with its original Indo-European meaning as a symbol of the Sun-god, which it retains today in Hinduism.)

An adequate explanation of the relationship between Mormonism and Masonry must also explain the even more extensive parallels between LDS doctrines and the religious ideas of antiquity. Brooke's claim that it is in "Reformation Europe and revolutionary England . . . [that] we will find the *closest* analogues, indeed critical antecedents" (5, emphasis added), to LDS esoteric doctrines is demonstrably wrong. Closer analogues can be found in the rituals and esoteric doctrines of early Christianity and Judaism in the eastern Mediterranean in the centuries before and after Christ.¹⁷

Unless Brooke can demonstrate that his body of analogues is superior both in quality and quantity to those adduced to Joseph's revelations from ancient sources, his thesis will unfortunately remain unproven. But however the question of the relationship between Mormonism and antiquity is resolved, the fact remains that whatever legitimate parallels Brooke may have discovered between Mormonism and the hermetic or alchemical traditions can best be explained by the fact that both traditions drew on the same biblical and ancient antecedents.

NOTES

¹A much more extensive version of this review appears in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 6, no. 2 (1994): 3-58.

²Hermeticism is an esoteric and eclectic blend of ancient Egyptian ideas with Neoplatonic and Neopythagorean philosophy. It focuses on the myth of the fall and return of the soul through the seven planetary spheres of the celestial realm. This return and deification is facilitated by obtaining an inner *gnosis* (knowledge) of God through study of esoteric texts (the *Corpus Hermeticum*), instruction by an initiated master, the contemplation of cosmology, and theurgical ritual. For a basic introduction to the *Corpus Hermeticum*, see Brian P. Copenhaver, *Hermetica* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992). For an introduction to the Egyptian background of the *Hermetica*, see Garth Fowden, *The Egyptian Hermes: A Historical Approach to the Late Pagan Mind* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986). The traditional Renaissance corpus has been expanded by new texts which have been classified by modern scholars as Hermetic; see Fowden, *Egyptian Hermes*, 3-11. On Hermeticism in the Renaissance, the classical study is Frances Amelia Yates, *Giordano Bruno and the Hermetic Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979). See also Elizabeth Ann Ambrose, *The Hermetica: An Annotated Bibliography*, Sixteenth Century Bibliography 30 (St. Louis: Center for Reformation Research, 1992).

³We used Folio Infobase, *LDS Collector's Edition*, 1993.

⁴*Times and Seasons* 5 (May 1, 1844): 526.

⁵Brigham Young and others, *Journal of Discourses*, vol. 3 (Liverpool: F. D. Richards, 1855-86), 168, 295 (1856); (hereafter cited as *Journal of Discourses*).

⁶*Times and Seasons* 3 (November 15, 1841): 780; the Sohar/Zohar is also mentioned in *Times and Seasons* 4 (June 1, 1843): 222, by Alexander Neibaur. Zohar is found seven times, always in reference to a proper name in the Old Testament.

⁷*Journal of Discourses* 5 (September 20, 1857): 260.

⁸Joseph Smith Jr., *History of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, ed. B. H. Roberts, 2d ed., rev., vol. 4 (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1971), 381 (hereafter cited as *History of the Church*); *Messenger and Advocate* (June 1837): 520; (September 1837): 570; *Times and Seasons* 2 (August 2, 1841): 498; (September 15, 1841): 545; 4 (September 1, 1843): 309; 5 (December 1, 1844): 734; *Journal of Discourses* 1:48, 145; 7:223; 10:28; 12:25; 13:332; 14:218; 17:155.

⁹*History of the Church* 5:384; *Times and Seasons* 4 (May 15, 1843): 203.

¹⁰*Times and Seasons* 2 (June 1, 1841): 434; 5 (February 1, 1844): 427; 6 (June 1, 1845): 916; *Journal of Discourses* 2:46; 13:135.

¹¹*History of the Church* 4:571; *Times and Seasons* 3 (April 1, 1842): 743; 3 (May 16, 1842): 794; *Journal of Discourses* 1:275; 2:15; 3:158; 9:2; 10:193; 14:203.

¹²*Messenger and Advocate* 3 (October 1836): 388-90; *Times and Seasons* 3 (November 15, 1841): 600; *Journal of Discourses* 6 (July 24, 1859): 360-61; 14:203.

¹³*Times and Seasons* 3 (May 16, 1842): 794.

¹⁴Jan Shipps and John W. Welch, eds., *The Journals of William E. McLellin, 1831-1836* (Provo: BYU Studies, 1994), 3.

¹⁵Courtney J. Lassetter, "Dispensations of the Gospel," in *Encyclopedia of Mormonism*, ed. Daniel H. Ludlow, vol. 1 (New York: Macmillan, 1992), 389.

¹⁶Thomas Smith Webb, *The Freemason's Monitor; or Illustrations of Masonry*, 2d ed. (New York: Southwick and Crooker, 1802), 246-47, 254-55.

¹⁷See also Truman G. Madsen, ed., *The Temple in Antiquity: Ancient Records and Modern Perspectives* (Provo, Utah: Religious Studies Center, Brigham Young University, 1984); Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri: An Egyptian Endowment* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975); Nibley, *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1992); Donald W. Parry, ed., *Temples of the Ancient World: Ritual and Symbolism* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1994). Compare such items (chosen from among many) as Todd M. Compton, "The Hand-clasp and Embrace as Tokens of Recognition," in *By Study and Also by Faith: Essays in Honor of Hugh Nibley on the Occasion of His Eightieth Birthday, 27 March 1990*, ed. John M. Lundquist and Stephen D. Ricks, 2 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book and F.A.R.M.S., 1990), 1:611-42; Todd M. Compton, "The Whole Token: Mystery Symbolism in Classical Recognition Drama," *Epoché* 13 (1985): 1-81; William J. Hamblin, "Aspects of an Early Christian Initiation Ritual," in *By Study and Also by Faith* 1:202-21. Interesting references to ancient ritual hand gestures can be found in Edward F. Campbell Jr., *Ruth*, Anchor Bible (New York: Doubleday, 1965), 74; Gordon Paul Hugenberger, *Marriage as a Covenant: A Study of Biblical Law and Ethics Governing Marriage, Developed from the Perspective of Malachi* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994), 211-13, 266. For a brief, wonderfully illustrated overview of the subject, see John M. Lundquist, *The Temple: Meeting Place of Heaven and Earth* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1993).