

Notes on "Gadianton Masonry"

Daniel C. Peterson

"Your leader, Monsieur?" said the Comtesse, eagerly. "Ah! of course, you must have a leader. And I did not think of that before! But tell me where is he? I must go to him at once, and I and my children must throw ourselves at his feet, and thank him for all that he has done for us."

"Alas, Madame!" said Lord Antony, "that is impossible."

"Impossible? — Why?"

"Because the Scarlet Pimpernel works in the dark, and his identity is only known under the solemn oath of secrecy to his immediate followers."

Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel*¹

The Problem

"In recent decades," writes Richard L. Bushman, "the environmentalist explanation of the Book of Mormon has replaced the Spalding hypothesis among non-Mormon scholars.... All but a few critics have dropped Spalding and Rigdon and credited Joseph Smith with authorship.... According to the environmentalists, Joseph absorbed images, attitudes, and conceptions from upstate New York rural culture and wove them into the Book of Mormon story."² Thomas F. O'Dea, the late Catholic scholar whose pioneering sociological study *The Mormons* remains justly famous today (more than three decades after its initial publication), will serve as an example of the environmentalist position on the Book of Mormon:

"It is obviously an American work growing in the soil of American concerns in terms of its basic plot," O'Dea declares.³ "There is a simple common-sense explanation which states that Joseph Smith was a normal person living in an atmosphere of religious excitement that influenced his behavior as it had that of so many thousands of others and, through a unique concomitance of circumstances, influences, and pressures, led him from necromancy into revelation, from revelation to prophecy, and from prophecy to leadership of an important religious movement and to involvement in the bitter and fatal intergroup conflicts that his innovations and success had called forth. To the non-Mormon who does not accept the work as a divinely revealed scripture, such an explanation on the basis of the evidence at hand seems by far the most likely and safest."⁴

Just how likely and safe the environmentalist view actually is can be debated. (We are perhaps entitled to ask just how many "normal" people have written scriptures and founded world religions.) Certainly, if one presupposes that Joseph Smith could not have had access to revelation, or to a historically authentic ancient text, it is the obvious alternative. Fawn Brodie, reminiscing in 1975 about her famous biography, *No Man Knows My History*,

recalled that “I was convinced before I ever began writing that Joseph Smith was not a true Prophet.”⁵ With this attitude — she calls the Book of Mormon a “first novel”⁶ — she was obliged to explain the book on the basis of Joseph’s mind, his experience, and the contents of his nineteenth-century environment, however inadequate that basis might be. Since she could not allow him any real contact with ancient or heavenly realities, she had no alternative.

“Since the odd contents of the volume lamentably or ludicrously fall before every canon of historical criticism,” Walter Prince blandly asserts, “scholars have not thought it worth while to discuss the notion of its ancient authorship, unless briefly for pragmatic and missionary purposes.”⁷ “There seems very little doubt today,”

Professor O’Dea dubiously declares, “as to Joseph Smith’s authorship of the *Book of Mormon*.”⁸ By this he means to say that such hypotheses as are represented by the Spalding manuscript theory have died the death. But clearly, for him and others of his general persuasion, the other alternative, Joseph Smith’s own story of the coming forth of the book, is simply unthinkable.

One of the primary exhibits in the prosecution’s attempt to prove the Book of Mormon a product of nineteenth-century frontier obscurantism involves what O’Dea describes as “the many references to Masonry in the work.”⁹ Prince knows a large number of passages “plainly referring to Masonry under the guise of pretended similar organizations in ancient America.”¹⁰ If this exhibit is only one instance of the “anachronism of feeling and reference [which] is evidence of late origin to the critic,” it is certainly among the most important to the case and one of the most complacently accepted by the prosecution’s partisans.¹¹ Thus, it clearly merits closer examination for its plausibility and logic. This paper will look into the alleged presence of Freemasonry in the Book of Mormon.

Alexander Campbell was perhaps the first environmentalist critic of the Book of Mormon, as is shown in his famous statement, “This prophet Smith, through his stone spectacles, wrote on the plates of Nephi, in his book of Mormon, every error and almost every truth discussed in New York for the last ten years. He decides all the great controversies; — infant baptism, ordination, the trinity, regeneration, repentance, justification, the fall of man, the atonement, transubstantiation, fasting, penance, church government, religious experience, the call to the ministry, the general resurrection, eternal punishment, who may baptize, and even the question of free masonry, republican government, and the rights of man.”¹² Without going into the details of his accusation, one might ask, When were most such questions *not* discussed in the history of Christianity?

Campbell, publishing on 10 February 1831, was the first who seems to allege that the Gadianton bands of the Book of Mormon reflect the Masonry of Joseph Smith’s day.¹³ But just how seriously he took this equation is not clear, since he also describes the Zoramites as “a sort of Episcopalians” and exclaims mockingly of Mormon as a military commander that “He was no Quaker!”¹⁴ In other contexts, however, he makes a more serious implied criticism when he satirically surmises that Mormon must have been informed of the Arian heresy by an angel and when he terms the early Nephites “believers in the doctrines of the Calvinists and the Methodists.”¹⁵ Clearly, his intention was to link the Book of Mormon with things modern rather than things ancient. But his statements on the alleged derivation of Gadiantonism from Freemasonry are little developed and not at all rigorous, and, indeed, Campbell later adopted the Spalding theory and abandoned the comparison. Resuscitating the idea that the Book of Mormon was suffused by Masonry was left to later critics of Mormonism.

According to Fawn Brodie, the second half of the Book of Mormon “was charged with a crusading spirit that stemmed directly from the greatest murder mystery that ever stirred New York State.”¹⁶ This was the murder of

William Morgan, ostensibly by Masons who were angered by his publication of the secret rites and oaths of their fraternity. According to Brodie's scenario, Joseph Smith was composing the Book of Mormon at the very time that the Morgan case was whipping up passions throughout the state, and especially in the very area where the would-be prophet resided. "Masonry," she writes, "was being denounced everywhere as a threat to free government, a secret cabal insidiously working into the key positions of state in order to regulate the whole machinery of the Republic."¹⁷ Joseph, ever alive to the currents of popular thought in his day, "quickly introduced into the book the theme of the Gadianton band, a secret society whose oaths for fraternal protection were bald parallels of Masonic oaths, and whose avowed aim was the overthrow of the democratic Nephite government."¹⁸

She even suggests, half seriously, that Joseph Smith might have coined the name "Mormon" partially on the basis of the name "Morgan." In this, she was following Walter Prince's articles, although evidently without acknowledgment.¹⁹ Such notions, unrestrained by linguistic discipline, tend to multiply like fruit flies. Thus, Persuitte notes that "Joseph might have derived the names Mormon, Moroni, and several others from that of Morgan" and wonders if the name of Giddianhi, one of the prominent robber leaders in the Book of Mormon, might be derived from that of a Mason named Giddins or Giddings, who turned state's evidence in the Morgan case.²⁰ Prince deduces the adjective "anti-Masonic" from names like "Manti" and "Antiomno" and blames Emma Hale for "Emer," "Ammah," and "Helaman." "Harmony," the town in Pennsylvania where Joseph did much of the translation of the Book of Mormon, shows up as "Himni."²¹ This sort of thing can really be quite fun when one turns oneself loose. Unfortunately for Professor Prince, however, a certain Theodore Schroeder was looking on, unamused by these "rigorous psychologic tests," as the professor quaintly described them. "To me," the anti-Mormon but honest Schroeder wrote, "they seem not at all rigorous nor a valid test of anything, and not even an important contribution to any problem except perhaps to the psychology of Dr. Prince.... [They] assume the very thing to be proven, namely: that the Book of Mormon names are of Smith's coinage." This fact shows Prince's method to be "so defective as to leave his conclusions wholly valueless. He reasons around in a circle."²²

Nonetheless, Brodie is certain of the connection between Gadiantonism and Masonry; there is no tentativeness. Gadianton and Masonic oaths are not merely analogous; the former are, as she informs us, "bald parallels" of the latter. The Book of Mormon account "stemmed directly" from Masonic inspiration. Brodie is able to refer, without the slightest hint that alternative views might exist, to "Gadianton Masonry." So sure is Brodie that she even manufactures parallels out of thin air: "Like the Masons, the Gadiantons claimed to derive their secrets from Tubal Cain."²³ This, if true, would have improved her case considerably—but the Book of Mormon nowhere mentions Tubal Cain. According to L. Hicks, Tubal-Cain is the "the eponymous ancestor of ancient metalworkers," as reflected in Genesis 4:22.²⁴ Brodie perhaps confused him with his ancestor Cain, with whom the Book of Mormon *does* associate the rise of "secret combinations" (see Helaman 6:27; Ether 8:15).²⁵

David Persuitte agrees with Brodie on the identification of the Gadianton robbers with the Masons and on the origin of the Gadianton band in the controversies surrounding the disappearance of William Morgan.²⁶ However, Persuitte is less dogmatic on the matter than is Brodie and clearly feels obliged to establish his case by argument rather than by mere *ex cathedra* assertion. Evidently he does not claim the mystical insight into Joseph Smith's mind that, as Hugh Nibley pointed out years ago, is so prominent a feature of Fawn Brodie's biographical method. Persuitte contends for his proposition on the basis of the theory that "the Gadiantons of *The Book of Mormon* have ... similarities with the popular rhetoric about the Masons."²⁷ "Joseph made a blunder," Persuitte remarks, "by having his book refer so frequently to the Masons. These references tag the book as a product of the early

nineteenth century.”²⁸ Prince, noting the same alleged connections, is able to date the book to the period 1826-29, with the year 1827 standing out in particular.²⁹

In the next few pages, I shall review the main similarities noted by Fawn Brodie, Robert Hullinger, David Persuitte, and Dan Vogel, four of the theory’s chief modern devotees, between the Gadianton robbers of the Book of Mormon and the Masons of Joseph Smith’s America. I shall then examine those purported similarities for significance and cogency.

What, then, are the main parallels adduced by our sources?

1. They point out that both the Gadianton movement and the Masons have secret signs and secret words that aid in mutual identification. Both have “oaths for fraternal protection” that oblige them to aid and protect one another, even in the committing of crimes.³⁰

2. Persuitte notes that both the Gadianton robbers and the Masons claim ancient origin.³¹

3. Persuitte and Hullinger show that the Book of Mormon refers to the Gadianton robbers using two of the same terms newspapers used in referring to the Masons during the great anti-Masonic agitation of the late 1820s: Both groups are described as “secret societies” and “secret combinations.”³² “At the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication,” writes Dan Vogel in a recently published paper, “the term ‘secret combinations’ was used almost exclusively to refer to Freemasonry.”³³ Indeed, Vogel asserts, the “secret combinations” of Doctrine and Covenants 42:64 (fear of which was one of the factors leading the Latter-day Saints to flee to Ohio in early 1831) can be none other than the Masons.³⁴

4. In referring to 3 Nephi 4:7, Persuitte claims that “lambskins” are the typical garb of both Masons and Gadianton robbers.³⁵

5. Persuitte notes the claim of 2 Nephi 26:22 that the Devil takes members of “secret combinations ... yea, and he leadeth them around by the neck with a flaxen cord,” and alleges the dependence of such a notion on reports that Masonic initiates bore a rope called a Cable-Tow around their necks.³⁶

6. Persuitte points out that both the Gadianton robbers and the Masons of the 1820s were seen as a threat to the institutions of their native lands. Brodie implicitly makes the same comparison.³⁷ Not unrelated to this is Prince’s declaration that “it is impossible to mistake the connection between the belief of the masses that the light sentences of the several men convicted of Morgan’s abduction was [sic] an insult to justice and the statement in the Book of Mormon that lawyers and others connected with the ancient covenants conspired to ‘deliver those who were guilty of murder from the grasp of justice.’”³⁸

7. “If any doubt remains,” asserts Persuitte, “that Joseph had the Masons in mind when he described the Gadiantons of The Book of Mormon, it should be removed by allusions in that book to the Masons of his own time.”³⁹ He then proceeds to cite some of the prophecies and warnings of the Book of Mormon concerning “secret combinations” in the last days.

8. Hullinger sees significance in “the high percentage of anti-Masons among Smith’s early converts in the 1830s when the anti-Masonic conflict was still fresh.”⁴⁰ (He offers, it should be noted, no evidence of any such “high percentage.”)⁴¹

9. Finally, as Bushman summarizes the critics’ position, “Joseph Smith’s later initiation into the Masons when a lodge was organized in Nauvoo in 1842 seems to confirm the idea of a fascination with Masonry, even though in Nauvoo Joseph was for the Masons instead of against them.”⁴²

Preliminary Evaluation

Bushman’s just-quoted summary suggests one of the major difficulties presented by taking the Book of Mormon’s Gadianton robbers to be a thinly veiled attack on Freemasonry. In order to do so, one must see Joseph Smith as a vocal and committed anti-Mason in 1830 who then, only twelve years later, enthusiastically joined the Masons and, as some would have it, borrowed the most sacred rituals of his religion from them.⁴³ “In other words,” says Theodore Schroeder (himself an avowed enemy of Mormonism, who held to the Spalding theory and termed Joseph Smith “an ignorant conscious fraud”), “when the Book of Mormon was finished, Smith’s ‘obsession’ suddenly and permanently disappears without any other explanation, and Joseph Smith himself became a Mason, in spite of this anti-Masonic obsession. Not long after its organization the Mormon church as a whole became a secret society and later was admittedly a ‘bastard masonry.’”⁴⁴

Is such a transformation plausible? It cannot, of course, be wholly ruled out. Nevertheless, there are some facts in the life of Joseph Smith and his family that make such an inference seem less than inescapable. First of all, the transformation from his alleged anti-Masonry to his universally admitted involvement in the craft cannot have taken twelve years. Instead, the sources seem to allow only thirty-three months. In a letter addressed to the Saints at Quincy, Illinois, and additionally signed by Hyrum Smith, among others, Joseph warned members of the Church of “the impropriety of the organization of bands or companies by covenant or oaths by penalties or secrecies.” “Let the time past of our experiance and suferings by the wickedness of Doctor Avard suffise and let our covenant be that of the everlasting covenant as is contained in the Holy writ. and the things that God hath revealed unto us. Pure friendship always becomes weakened the verry moment you undertake to make it stronger by penal oaths and secrecy.”⁴⁵ This letter was dated 20 March 1839. Noting that Hyrum Smith was among the signers is important, since, as I shall discuss below, he had joined the Masons already in 1823.

It was on 15 October 1841 that Grandmaster Jonas granted permission to George Miller to open a lodge of Freemasons in Nauvoo.⁴⁶ That is only thirty-one months later, just over two and a half years. Only thirty-three months after the letter, George Miller held the first Masonic meeting in Nauvoo, on 29 December 1841, at the office of Hyrum Smith. This meeting saw the election of temporary officers and the drafting of by-laws. On the following day, 30 December, the second meeting of the Nauvoo Lodge was held, and a petition was submitted, accompanied by a list of names applying for new membership. Among the applicants were Willard Richards, Brigham Young, Sidney Rigdon, Wilford Woodruff, John Taylor, and many other prominent leaders of the Church — including, most notably, Joseph Smith himself. (The formal admission of these new members did not take place until 15 March 1842.)⁴⁷

The putative transition period may have to be shortened yet further. On 19 January 1841, less than two years after the letter to the Saints at Quincy, Joseph claimed to have received a revelation that made reference to Moses building a tabernacle in the wilderness, “that those ordinances might be revealed which had been hid from before

the world was.” The revelation included a commandment to build a temple at Nauvoo. “For,” Joseph quoted the Lord as saying, “I deign to reveal unto my church things which have been kept hid from before the foundation of the world, things that pertain to the dispensation of the fulness of times” (D&C 124:38, 41). If one were to accept the endowment-as-Masonic-plagiarism theory, one might believe that Joseph had begun fishing in Masonic waters at or around this time (although one must admit that similar promises go back to at least 16 February 1832 [see D&C 76:7]). Certainly the short interval between Joseph’s Masonic initiations on 15 and 16 March 1842 and the introduction of the full endowment ceremony on 4 May 1842 would have left him little leisure for the massive reorientation of the Masonic rites that would be required on this hypothesis. And he was not idle in the intervening time, during which he organized the Relief Society, preached several major sermons, took part in several conferences and meetings, and concentrated on legal issues.⁴⁸

Is a complete about-face on the issue of Freemasonry plausible in the space of just over two and a half years or less? It cannot, still, be ruled out. But is it not more plausible to assume that the kind of secret society condemned by Joseph and Hyrum Smith in their letter of 20 March 1839 and by the Book of Mormon, published in 1830, had, in their minds, no direct connection with Freemasonry?⁴⁹ This is no small question.

It is a question particularly relevant to the seventh of the parallels suggested by our sample population of the Book of Mormon’s environmentalist reducers. However, a few moments of thought will show clearly that the alleged parallel rests on circular reasoning. That the prophecies of the Book of Mormon refer to the Masons of Joseph Smith’s day is not at all obvious, though it is a possibility. To be certain that they do so refer, one must be certain that the secret combinations of the Book of Mormon narrative, with which those of the latter-days are equated, are in fact Masonic. But this is precisely the point at issue. An assumption that the Gadianton robbers are Masons cannot be used to prove that they are Masons. In fact, the March 1839 letter to the Church at Quincy, alluded to above, clearly refers to Sampson Avard and his Danites, and its denunciation of secret societies has no connection with Freemasonry at all.⁵⁰ (I myself see no reason to insist upon a simple one-to-one equation between the Gadianton robbers and any single modern organization. As I note below, at least some nineteenth-century Saints in this regard saw the persecutions they suffered as ample fulfillment of the prophecies of the Book of Mormon.)

There is scarcely more substance in the first alleged parallel, which notes that both the Gadianton movement and the Masons have secret signs and secret words to aid their adherents in mutual identification and protection. This is precisely what constitutes them as secret societies — and nobody denies the fact that they both, in a certain sense, fit under that category. But so do many organizations, including (apparently) the early Christian church itself. Around the year A.D. 200, for example, the Christian lawyer and apologist Minucius Felix wrote a dialogue named after Octavius, a deceased friend of his. In that dialogue, a pagan known as Q. Caecilius Natalis presents a sharp-tongued case against the Christians, in which, among other things, he labels them “a profane conspiracy.”

“Assuredly,” Caecilius declares, “this confederacy ought to be rooted out and execrated.”⁵¹ Their sins are many, and their offenses numerous, but all are made more irritating still by their clandestine character. “They recognize one another by secret signs and marks.”⁵² Commenting upon this accusation, the modern scholar Stephen Benko notes that “according to Justin Martyr (ca. 100-165) the Jews recognized each other by the secret sign of circumcision, and some pagans may still at this time have identified Christians with Jews. But the secret sign referred to by Caecilius could have been anything: the sign of the cross, the sign of the fish, or even a mark on the body, or a movement of the hand. It is natural for covert and persecuted groups of people to adopt such signs. In more recent times, secret societies such as the Freemasons have been suspected of using them.”⁵³ (At least one of

the Gnostic groups of the third to fourth century, the Phibionites, did use a kind of secret handclasp for mutual identification.)⁵⁴

Furthermore, that both Gadianton robbers and nineteenth-century Masons swear to uphold one another in crimes is merely the accusation that enemies of a secret, oath-bound society might be predicted to make — and both groups undeniably had enemies. What is needed is something more specific to link the two. However, this is not forthcoming. In fact, even on this score the dissimilarity between Gadiantonism and Freemasonry (as it was perceived by its foes) is striking.

“The [early nineteenth-century American] interest in Masonry,” Richard Bushman notes, “provided a large market for anti-Masonic books and audiences for speakers who traveled from town to town to divulge Masonic secrets. The pamphlets rehearsed in great detail the lengthy Masonic initiation rites, elucidating the initiations into each of the degrees and going on to describe the specialized orders in Masonry’s many branches.” This is not at all what we find when we consult the Book of Mormon. “In the supposed anti-Masonic passages in the Book of Mormon,” continues Bushman, “nothing was said about Masonic degrees or elaborate initiation rituals. Anti-Masonic books went on endlessly with all the details of how one passed from degree to degree, while acceptance of a simple oath of secrecy and allegiance admitted a person to the Gadianton bands.” Anti-Masonic rabble-rousers, Bushman notes, were “playing to the public’s fascination with hidden rituals.” The most intriguing parallel to be noted here, it seems to me, is that between these nineteenth-century charlatans and certain contemporary anti-Mormon lecturers, books, and films.⁵⁵

One could actually argue that as many parallels exist between Baroness Orczy’s “League of the Scarlet Pimpernel” — alluded to in the epigraph of the present article — and the Gadianton robbers, as between the latter and nineteenth-century Freemasonry. Members of Orczy’s fictional “band” or “society” — for so it is called — are bound by a “solemn oath of secrecy” (cf. Helaman 6:25, 26; 4 Nephi 1:42) to their leader, who “works in the dark” (cf. 2 Nephi 9:9; 10:15; 25:2; 26:10; 26:22; Alma 37:21, 23; 45:12; Helaman 6:28-30; 8:4; 10:3; Moroni 8:27). This oath, the novelist informs us, “was one of obedience and secrecy,” and members of the “League” — “who seemed to obey his every command blindly and enthusiastically” — were ready to lay down their lives in defense of their leader whenever he was in danger. From the standpoint of the novelist, of course, the Scarlet Pimpernel is a hero — as are the Gadianton robbers themselves from their own perspective (see, for example, 3 Nephi 3:2-10). On the other hand, to the government of revolutionary France, he is that nation’s “most bitter enemy,” since he conspires to deliver aristocratic “traitors” from the grasp of revolutionary “justice.” Clearly, to a narrator from the government, the “League of the Scarlet Pimpernel” would be a conspiracy bound by oath to protect one another in the commission of crimes.⁵⁶

What is one to make of these obvious parallels? Since the as yet unborn Baroness Orczy did not write the Book of Mormon, and since Joseph Smith did not write *The Scarlet Pimpernel*, probably nothing. What we see here are merely the promises of secrecy, loyalty, and mutual assistance generically common to groups involved in dangerous clandestine activity. A significant number of significant shared details would be needed to demonstrate the likelihood of a genetic relationship, but these are presently available in neither the case of Baroness Orczy nor that of the Freemasons.

Persuitte’s observation — item #2 — that both organizations claim ancient origin is correct, but it implies greater correspondence than actually exists. Parallels as vague as this can be used to almost any purpose. For instance, E. D. Howe, the anti-Masonic editor of the *Painesville Telegraph* in Ohio, linked the Masons and the Latter-day Saints

(!) because of a common claim to antiquity.⁵⁷ Pursuite's nineteenth-century source alludes to the Masonic legend tracing the origin of their movement to Solomon, an origin nineteenth-century Latter-day Saints tended to accept. Thus Brigham Young, speaking in the Tabernacle on 10 February 1867, asked: "Who was the founder of Freemasonry? They can go back as far as Solomon, and there they stop. There is the king who established this high and holy order."⁵⁸

But the Book of Moron never connects Solomon with the Gadianton robbers.⁵⁹ Instead, while the robbers themselves claim merely an unspecified antiquity, their opponents link them with Lucifer and Cain. (Early American anti-Masons, for all their conviction of the evil of their foe, did not assert so literal a link with Satan.⁶⁰ On the other hand, the accusation of Satanic origin is precisely what we would expect in an ancient source. "The Fathers of the Church," Kurt Rudolph points out, "simply traced back the rise of Gnosis to the devil.")⁶¹ The Lamanites did not attempt any objective historical account or ideological genealogy — no more than did the Nephite prophets in the face of the threat confronting them. Besides, virtually all movements in the ancient world sought to establish pedigrees back to earlier times; innovation has not always been thought a virtue as it is in today's technological societies. As on certain other issues, one is tempted to say that the environmentalist detractors of the Book of Mormon here reveal their limited, provincial knowledge of history. In the (largely Arabic) vocabulary of Islam, for example, the most common word for "heresy" is *bid'ā* — literally, "innovation."

But there is yet more reason to question the significance of this seeming correspondence. As D. Michael Quinn has pointed out, Masonic claims to antiquity were limited in scope, and the anti-Masons of Joseph Smith's day denied such claims in any event. "To have accepted the antiquity of Freemasonry, while arguing against its legitimacy, would probably have seemed inconsistent, if not contradictory, to most early nineteenth-century anti-Masons and largely irrelevant to the central issues of their polemic." Yet this, according to Pursuite's model, is precisely the argument the Book of Mormon implies — an argument wholly out of character for the anti-Masonry of early nineteenth-century New York.⁶² "Based upon my reading of the sources," writes Quinn, "statements in early Mormon scriptures about the origin and purpose of secret combinations tended to reject rather than reflect the anti-Masonry of Joseph Smith's environment."⁶³

Pursuite's demonstration — item #3 — that both the Book of Mormon and nineteenth-century newspapers refer to "secret societies" and "secret combinations" proves merely that the vocabulary of the English Book of Mormon is very likely that of a nineteenth-century American. This was never in doubt. Noah Webster's 1828 *American Dictionary of the English Language* defines "combination" first as "intimate union, or association of two or more persons or things, by set purpose or agreement, for effecting some object, by joint operation; in a *good sense*, when the object is laudable; in an *ill sense*, when it is illegal or iniquitous. It is sometimes equivalent to league, or to conspiracy. We say, a *combination* of men to overthrow government, or a *combination* to resist oppression."⁶⁴ *Bouvier's Law Dictionary and Concise Encyclopedia*, originally published in 1839, defines "combination" as "a union of men for the purpose of violating the law."⁶⁵

Furthermore, use of the word in this sense, although it may seem rather peculiar to modern Americans, has an old and very honorable pedigree. It appears numerous times in the works of Shakespeare, for example. The word is used precisely in the sense of "conspiracy" in *King Henry VIII*, where the Duke of Buckingham reveals Cardinal Wolsey's attempted treachery to the king: "This cunning cardinal the articles o' the combination drew as himself pleased."⁶⁶ John Milton, in his *Animadversions* (1641), writes scornfully of "a combination of Libelling Separatists" and then, in the *Eikonoklastes* of 1649, denounces "Mysterie and combination between Tyranny and fals Religion."

(In a discussion of “Theevs and Pirates” in the same work, he expressly equates “combination” with “conspiracy.”)⁶⁷ Such examples could be multiplied indefinitely.

More directly to our present purposes, use of the word in the sense of “conspiracy” was not at all uncommon in the United States during the decades following the American Revolution. It occurs, for example, in George Washington’s “Proclamation on the Whiskey Rebellion” (7 August 1794) and in his “Farewell Address” (19 September 1796). It appears numerous times in the Federalist Papers.⁶⁸ It can be found in the context of labor relations (and even with the clear implication of secrecy) in William Cullen Bryant’s “On the Right to Strike” from 13 June 1836, as well as in the Connecticut court reporter’s account of the case of *Thompsonville Carpet Manufacturing Co. v. William Taylor, etc., etc.*, from January of that same year, and in a 24 April 1875 editorial of the *National Labor Tribune*.⁶⁹ That similar notions were current among Mormons of the last century is illustrated by George Q. Cannon’s comments in 1900 on “secret organizations” in labor disputes.⁷⁰ Why should Joseph Smith not have used this word? (Does Mrs. Brodie’s use of the phrase “secret cabal” to describe the anti-Masons’ view of Masonry – cited previously in this paper – allow us to infer that she, or the Masons, or anybody else involved in the matter, has any connection whatsoever with the medieval Jewish mystical tradition of *qabbalah*, from which the word *cabal* comes?) In fact, so well-suited is the term as a description of genuine historical phenomena in the ancient world that one Latter-day Saint graduate student at a prestigious secular university was acceptably able to write in his doctoral dissertation of “secret combinations” in the days of the Roman Empire.⁷¹ Appropriately, these were “combinations which prevented legal justice in a quest for extra-legal enrichment.”⁷²

Dan Vogel’s claim that the phrase “secret combination” (emphasis mine) was used virtually exclusively to refer to Freemasonry at the time of the Book of Mormon’s publication would, if true, be a fact worthy of note. But there is as yet no particular reason to think it true, and considerable reason to doubt it. Vogel’s own evidence – which consists of seven anti-Masonic newspaper quotations⁷³ merely demonstrates what has been known for many years, that the phrase was indeed sometimes employed in reference to Masons. But this is a far cry from demonstrating that such was its *exclusive* use. (One could, by careful searching of the transcripts of the Army-McCarthy hearings, construct a powerful case for the proposition that, in the America of the 1950s, “conspiracy” meant “communism.” But this would be utterly false and entirely misleading.)

What is needed, before one can confidently declare that the phrase “secret combination” was never used in non-Masonic contexts in the 1820s and 1830s, is a careful search of documents from that period of American history *that have nothing to do with the controversy surrounding the Masons*. This has not yet been done. Nevertheless, there is good reason already to predict that such a survey would not support Vogel’s claim. After all, we have already seen that the term “combination” was an entirely ordinary word, in common use in early America to mean “conspiracy.” And certainly the adjective “secret” is not so hard to imagine prefixed to “conspiracy.” (We are not dealing here with an esoteric piece of technical terminology!)

A search of those nineteenth-century federal and state court opinions available on computer readily yields ten occurrences of the phrase “secret combination” – and most of the occurrences do not even relate to secret societies as such.⁷⁴ Unfortunately, though, many states did not begin printing reports with any degree of comprehensiveness until midway through the nineteenth century, and a large number of the older opinions are not on computer since they are not of current legal interest. Nevertheless, the following sampling reflects broad cultural and legal usage of the phrase “secret combination” in the nineteenth century:

In an 1850 decision, *Marshall v. Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co.*, 57 U.S. 314, the United States Supreme Court warned against agents who are “stimulated to active partisanship by the strong lure of high profit” and denounced “any attempts to deceive persons entrusted with the high functions of legislation by *secret combinations* or to create or bring into operation undue influences of any kind.” Such conduct was said to have “all the injurious effects of a direct fraud on the public.” Half a century later, in *Hayward v. Nordberg Mfg. Co.*, 85 F.4 (6th Cir., 1898), the fraud of practicing deceit on the legislature was characterized as an attempt to deceive by “*secret combinations*,” citing the language in *Marshall v. Baltimore and Ohio Railroad Co.*

In *Hyer v. Richmond Traction Co.*, 168 U.S. 471 (1897), the court held that if courts could not be appealed to for certain relief, “it is evident that powerful *secret combinations* would be formed to procure vicious legislation under false pretenses.”

In *Wiborg v. United States*, 163 U.S. 632 (1896), a conspiracy between a person and a captain of a ship was described as “a secret combination.”

In the dissenting opinion in *United States v. E. C. Knight Co.*, 156 U.S. 1 (1895), a monopolistic agreement in restraint of trade was called a “shrewd, deep-laid, secret combination, [which] attempted to control and monopolize the entire grain trade of the town and surrounding country.”

In *Lyon v. Pollock*, 99 U.S. 668 (1878), a case involving a Civil War Union sympathizer in Texas included among its facts the assertion that this person’s life was “in consequence threatened by a *secret combination* of men known as the Knights of the Golden Circle, and that he was compelled to leave the country secretly and in haste.”

In *Hoffman v. McMullen*, 83 F.372 (9th Cir., 1897), the court ruled on an agreement in restraint of fair competition, holding that “where there is a *secret combination*, call it partnership or any other name,” the natural effect is the equivalent of fraud.

In a covenant not to compete, litigated in *Faulkner v. Empire State Nail Co.*, 67 F.913 (2nd Cir., 1895), the defendant had agreed not to disclose nor divulge any “information, knowledge, *secret combination*, or other thing whatsoever pertaining to or connected with the business.”

In *Brundage v. Deardorf*, 55 F.839 (N.D. Ohio, 1893), a set of articles pertaining to local ministers contained a section prohibiting them from having “any connection with *secret combinations*, nor shall involuntary servitude be tolerated in any way.”

Finally, in *United States v. Trans-Missouri Freight Association*, 53 F.440 (D. Kansas, 1892), an agreement in restraint of trade was held illegal since “it was apparent that the object was to form a *secret combination*, which would stifle all competition, and enable the parties by secret and fraudulent means to control the price of grain, cost of storage, and expense of shipment.”

These opinions show that the phrase “secret combination” was commonly used in the second half of the nineteenth century, and over a wide geographical area, to describe any kind of secret agreement, coalition to exercise undue influence on the legislature, agreement in restraint of trade, secret business transactions, secret societies, and many other things. The phrase appears in catch-all pleonastic lists where the court is attempting to prohibit all forms of pernicious, secretive actions. These usages clearly demonstrate that the phrases “secret combination” and “secret combinations” were understood broadly in the nineteenth century.

The use of the term “combination” continues even today, of course, in antitrust regulation, where “lawful combinations” are distinguished from “unlawful combinations,” much in the manner of the 1828 Webster definition cited previously. In antitrust discussions, “combination” is occasionally used as an antonym of “competition,” and as a synonym for “monopoly” and “conspiracy.”⁷⁵ One of the chief aims of combinations, so viewed, is the fixing of prices at artificially high levels, and the usual method chosen to effect this end is the source of the common legal phrase “combination in restraint of trade.”⁷⁶

What better term could Joseph Smith possibly have chosen to describe a group who had banded together among the ancient inhabitants of the Americas, “that they might get gain” (Helaman 6:17)? Thus, Joel Hills Johnson, reminiscing about the winter and spring of 1841, recalled that certain members of the Church in Ramus, Illinois, began to form what he termed a “secret combination,” feeling themselves justified in stealing from the Gentiles.⁷⁷ Similarly, Heber C. Kimball claimed that the Kirtland apostates, in the winter of 1837-38, “entered into combinations to obtain wealth by fraud and every means that was evil.”⁷⁸

If some object that all of the decisions and legal materials cited above are considerably later than the 1830 publication of the Book of Mormon, I can only sadly agree that the laborious task of combing the unindexed and non-computerized legal and other records of the first half of the nineteenth century remains to be done. But the apparently widespread use of the phrase “secret combination” in nineteenth-century litigation, coupled with the highly conservative nature of legal language, leads me confidently to expect that the phrase was common in the earlier period as well. (The *Oxford English Dictionary*, under its entry for “combination,” cites a certain Archbishop Bancroft already from 1593, whose language and intent is remarkably like what we seek: “By reason of their said combination and secretnesse used, many thinges lie hidde from those in authority.”)

In fact, a survey of my own home library (lasting less than an hour) turned up one highly interesting specimen from precisely the period in question. (And since my collection concentrates on Islamic studies and classical philosophy rather than on nineteenth-century Americana, one can imagine what someone better equipped and with more time might turn up.) On 25 June 1831, Frederick Robinson, a journalist and Massachusetts legislator, wrote a letter to attorney Rufus Choate attacking bar associations as “monopolies in the practice of law.” His language in doing so is directly relevant to our present concerns.

The bar association, he says, is a “secret, powerfully organized fraternity.” He repeatedly terms it a “secret bar association,” and refers to the “brotherhood of the bar” and “the secret brotherhood of the bar.” It is a “fraternity,” a “secret fraternity,” “a privileged order,” and a “secret, interested, organized body within the legislature.” It is, precisely, a “secret society.” Robinson accuses this “holy alliance” of “lawcraft” and charges that they have “set [them]selves up in opposition to the will of the people, and attempt by every means to invalidate the acknowledged laws of the land.” The bar is attempting, he says, to seize control of the judicial system of the United States and to establish itself as a kind of aristocracy. This, he declares, “is an encroachment on the natural rights of man.” Already, the situation is far gone. “Most of the offices of government are in your hands,” he says to attorney Choate, expressly mentioning the presidents, governors, justices, sheriffs, judges, solicitors, attorneys of the state, and the press. He continues,

The root of this aristocracy, which saps the liberties of the people and has branched out and covered the land, is in our colleges. Into these you are initiated in infancy; your seclusion from the world and your pursuits being different from the rest of society naturally excites your vanity, ambition, and pride; and even in infancy you look upon yourselves as a “superior order,” as the future lawyers, doctors, priests,

judges, and governors of mankind; and you look upon the rest of the world as inferior—plebeians, laborers, educated only for manual employment. You are there permitted even in infancy to form secret associations, “Phi Beta Kappa Societies,” etc., in which you are taught to recognize each other by signs and grips and passwords, and swear to stand by each other through life.

(Was Brodie simply somewhat off base? Is the Book of Mormon an extended critique of Phi Beta Kappa?)

“You say that the bar is a ‘necessary evil,’ ” Robinson concludes.

I know that it is an evil; that it is necessary I deny. I know of no good resulting to the community from the existence of your secret bar association. Public good was not the object of your combination. It is a conspiracy against the rights and liberties of the people. The same motives influence you to associate into a fraternity denominated “the bar,” which induce robbers to constitute a society called “a banditti,” and one of these societies is as much a “necessary evil” as the other. And the *bar rules* of “these privileged orders” are not very dissimilar. The object of them both is to protect each other in their robberies and extortions, and to “put down” and destroy everyone who will not submit to their “rules and regulations,” and become sworn brothers of the banditti, or the bar. Of these secret societies, however, the bar is the most to be feared. The one robs us of our purse, openly and honorably in comparison, in the highway, against law and at the risk of life. The other robs us, not of our purse alone but of our rights also, in the sanctuary and under the semblance of the law.⁷⁹

The themes in Frederick Robinson’s letter are so close to those sounded in the Book of Mormon that an environmentalist would want to cite it as a source — had it not been written more than a year after the publication of the Nephite record. And it has no reference to Freemasonry. Note the appearance in this final paragraph, in close succession, of the terms “secret bar association,” “combination,” “conspiracy,” “secret society.” Can any reader of the letter doubt that, for Robinson, the terms were essentially equivalent? Can anyone doubt that his not using the exact phrase “secret combination” was pure chance? Can anyone doubt that a more extensive search in period writings will locate precisely that phrase?

But what of Dan Vogel’s assertion, based upon Doctrine and Covenants 42:64, that fear of Masonic “secret combinations” drove the Saints from New York to Ohio? First of all, we should note that Vogel offers no evidence whatsoever for his contention. Furthermore, there are plenty of reasons for the move other than invoking some supposed anti-Masonic paranoia among early Mormons: For instance, directing members of the Church scattered across several states was difficult for Joseph Smith; more members were in Ohio than in any other state; membership in Ohio was growing more rapidly than elsewhere. Finally, persecution and physical harassment were growing in New York. The move thus seems quite a natural one.

But then, who *were* the “secret combinations”? I think it likely that they were simply persecutors, the mobs with whom Mormons would become so wearily well acquainted.⁸⁰ W. W. Phelps, for instance, writing in the *Times and Seasons*, 25 December 1844, not many months after the martyrdom of Joseph and Hyrum Smith, did not hesitate to assign to persecution the same genealogy (back to Cain and Lamech) that the scriptures give to secret combinations (see Helaman 6:27; Ether 8:15; Moses 5:29-41, 47-55).⁸¹

Remarks made in connection with the 1884 murder of two missionaries in Tennessee also suggest such a linkage. At the funeral of Elder John Gibbs, held on 24 August of that year, Elder Moses Thatcher of the Council of the Twelve said, “I remember distinctly the impressions that were made upon the minds of some of our people when

they first learned of the organization of certain secret societies in the east, organized with the intention, no doubt, of taking life; and it is my strong belief and my firm opinion that the body which lies before us today, lifeless, is the result of the operations of the secret societies which, we have been forewarned, would be organized in the latter times.”⁸² George F. Gibbs, a brother of the murdered missionary and a ranking Church official in his own right, concurred. “It was soon after the Anti-Mormon league in Cleveland was formed, that my brother wrote and told me that the influence of that league had reached the Southern States. He stated that he had met that influence in conversation with and in the presence of mobocratic men, and I have no doubt whatever as to the correctness of Brother Thatcher’s remarks in this respect.”⁸³ Perhaps significantly, the perpetrators of the crime were said to have been dressed in the robes of the Ku Klux Klan.⁸⁴

Newel Knight (1800-1850), recalling events in Missouri in July of 1833, described “the solemn covenant entered into by the mob, wherein they pledged their lives, their bodily power, fortunes and sacred honors to drive the Saints from Jackson Co.” (Note the oath-bound character of the group, at least in Knight’s perception.) This was, he says, an “unholy combination.”⁸⁵ It was against precisely such persecutors that Joseph Smith had invoked the Lord’s assistance in his prayer at the 1836 dedication of the Kirtland Temple. “We ask thee, Holy Father,” he had prayed, “to establish the people that shall worship, and honorably hold a name and standing in this thy house, to all generations and for eternity; that no weapon formed against them shall prosper; that he who diggeth a pit for them shall fall into the same himself; that no combination of wickedness shall have power to rise up and prevail over thy people upon whom thy name shall be put in this house” (D&C 109:24-26).⁸⁶

Thus, to at least some Latter-day Saints of the nineteenth century, “secret combinations” were simply those organizations or mobs that persecuted the Saints of God, “condemning the righteous because of their righteousness” (Helaman 7:5), acting in secret to carry out their evil designs. And the Saints had abundant scriptural warrant for such a view. On the other hand, there is no reason to suppose that the “secret combinations” alluded to in the Doctrine and Covenants have any connection at all with Freemasonry.

What is more, a proclamation Joseph Smith issued on 25 March 1843 in his capacity as mayor of Nauvoo clearly shows that the Prophet, who had by now been a Mason for somewhat over a year and who had introduced the full endowment ceremony on 4 May 1842, was still entirely capable of denouncing “secret combinations,” and without any reference to Freemasonry whatsoever:

Whereas it is reported that there now exists a band of desperadoes, bound by oaths of secrecy, under severe penalties in case any member of the combination divulges their plans of stealing and conveying properties from station to station, up and down the Mississippi and other routes: And whereas it is reported that the fear of the execution of the pains and penalties of their secret oath on their persons prevents some members of said secret association (who have, through falsehood and deceit, been drawn into their snares,) from divulging the same to the legally constituted authorities of the land: Know ye, therefore, that I, Joseph Smith, mayor of the city of Nauvoo, will grant and insure protection against all personal mob violence to each and every citizen of this city who will freely and voluntarily come before me and truly make known the names of all such abominable characters as are engaged in said secret combination for stealing, or are accessory thereto, in any manner.⁸⁷

This document is of the deepest interest, for it shows Joseph Smith using the term “secret combination” — he later declared that his intention was “to ferret out a *band* of thievish outlaws from our midst” (emphasis mine; the word “band” is frequently used in the Book of Mormon with reference to the Gadianton movement) — many years after

the anti-Masonic agitation of the 1820s and in a context that clearly has nothing to do with the Masons. Furthermore, Joseph Smith the practicing Mason is the one who here decried the secret oaths of the thieves that bound them to one another in wickedness, and he did so on the basis of intelligence his long-time Mason brother, Hyrum, supplied: "In the office at eight, a. m.; heard a report from Hyrum Smith concerning thieves; whereupon I issued the following Proclamation."⁸⁸

Is there any reason to doubt that neither the secret society Joseph and Hyrum denounced in their 1839 letter to Quincy, nor the "secret combination" they referred to in this proclamation of 1843, had the slightest connection with Freemasonry? And is there any reason, therefore, to suppose that the "secret combinations" of the Book of Mormon *do*? Furthermore, is it not apparent that the Book of Mormon's negative attitude toward "secret combinations" continues to be shared by Joseph Smith not only thirty-one months before, but also more than a year after, his public involvement with Freemasonry? Where, then, is the evidence of his alleged conversion from anti-Masonry in the late 1820s (during the translation of the Book of Mormon) to pro-Masonry in the 1840s (when he was revealing the ordinances of the temple)?

The contention of item #5 — that the devil's flaxen cord is the Masonic Cable-Tow — hardly seems specific enough to justify much weight being placed upon it. After all, animals are commonly led by the neck in cultures the world over, and the image seems a natural one, as in the example of the two long-necked beasts on the so-called "Narmer Palette" (ca. 3100 B.C.) from Hierakonopolis, which is now in the Egyptian Museum at Cairo. Even more to the point, the image of leading human captives by means of a rope around the neck is virtually universal in ancient art, and so must have been common in real life as well. The examples that come immediately to mind are Egyptian ones, like the Semitic captives from Syria/Palestine depicted upon the second pylon of Ramses III's mortuary temple at Medinet Habu, or the many prisoners shown in the triumphal monument of Sheshonk I (the biblical Shishak, who looted Jerusalem in the tenth century B.C.) at the temple of Karnak, or the victorious return of Seti I from Syro-Palestine shown again in the Karnak temple. Similar illustrations from the non-Egyptian art of the ancient Near East could also be multiplied indefinitely and without difficulty.

The Bible abounds with such imagery, too. "Loose the bonds from your neck, O captive one, Fair Zion!" says Isaiah, promising the restoration of Israel, "For thus said the Lord: You were sold for no price, and shall be redeemed without money" (Isaiah 52:2-3, Jewish Publication Society translation). Besides, the Book of Mormon mentions the flaxen cord only once, while the image of Satan leading his dupes is a ubiquitous one. He "leadeth them away carefully down to hell" (2 Nephi 28:21) and he secures them with "his everlasting chains ... his awful chains, from whence there is no deliverance" (2 Nephi 28:18, 22). Where is the Masonic parallel for the chains?

A Near Eastern parallel that seems at least as close as the purported Masonic one is the "cord of fibre" [*habl min masad*] about the neck of Abu Lahab's wife in Sara 111 of the Qur'an. The nickname "Abu Lahab," or "Father of Flame," was applied to Muhammad's uncle ^cAbd al-^cUzza b. ^cAbd al-Muttalib for his (quite unfamiliar) opposition to the message of Islam, and as a none-too-subtle hint of his ultimate infernal destination. So too was his wife Jumayl bint Harb b. Umayya promised punishment in the afterlife. E. W. Lane writes that the *habl min masad* of our passage came to be thought of in Muslim folklore as "a chain seventy cubits in length, whereby the woman upon whose neck it is to be put shall be led into hell." (*Here is a "chain"!*) *Masad*, he says, is basically "the fibres that grow at the roots of the branches of the palm-tree."⁸⁹ Will we therefore claim a tie between Masonry and the Qur'an because both use cords to lead captives?

Likewise, the parallel of item #6 — that both Freemasons and Gadiantons posed a threat to the institutions of their homelands — is too broad to prove anything by itself. What the Gadianton robbers here are said to share with the

imagined Masonic threat of the 1820s would also be common to the Bolsheviks, the First Continental Congress, the Egyptian Free Officers, and the followers of Oliver Cromwell. (The robbers are, indeed, and quite significantly, closer still to the Catilinian conspiracy of the late Roman Republic and to the famous Chinese Boxer rebellion. I plan to discuss these two movements in a sequel to the present paper.) Taken in connection with other parallels, this one might have significance — but its validity most definitely rests upon the validity of those other parallels, which is not at all well established.

The comparison Prince made between the allegations, on the one hand, that Masonic judges had given light sentences to their fellow Masons in the Morgan murder trial, and the description in 3 Nephi 6:29, on the other hand, of those who, because of their Gadianton oath, “deliver those who were guilty of murder from the grasp of justice,” is an interesting one. The comparison would be far more interesting still if we had an account of any early Latter-day Saint who had made the same comparison. To my knowledge, we do not.

Incidentally, Prince did not quote the following verse, 3 Nephi 6:30, which represents the Gadiantons as covenanting with one another “to establish a king over the land.” How would this fit the context of Joseph Smith’s America and the contemporary anti-Masonic furor? “Anti- Jackson politicians saw in the rising fever the makings of a political party,” writes Fawn Brodie. “The Democrats were appalled to count nineteen anti-Masonic conventions within twelve months and began to wonder if they might lose the election because their beloved Andrew Jackson was a Mason of high rank. Masonry was being denounced everywhere as a threat to free government, a secret cabal insidiously working into the key positions of state in order to regulate the whole machinery of the Republic.”⁹⁰ It is clear, is it not, which side the early and — so we are to believe — rabidly anti-Masonic Latter-day Saints would choose? The vast majority of the anti-Masons joined the rising Whig party — but, at least in Kirtland, the Mormons were “Jacksonian Democrats almost to a man.”⁹¹

The lambskin parallel between the Masons and the Gadiantons, item #4, is an intriguing one at first glance. However, the Book of Mormon places no great emphasis on the lambskin mentioned in 3 Nephi 4:7, where it is simply one among a number of elements of clothing the Gadiantons wore. Indeed, it is mentioned only once in the entire book. (In view of Alma 51:33-52:1, which tells us that the weather was hot in the first month of the year in Nephite territory, it is possible that the events of 3 Nephi 4:7, occurring in the sixth month, took place during the cold season. Is this significant?) Clearly the proto-Gadianton conspirators of Helaman 1-2 have no distinctive manner of dress. Nothing in their clothing distinguishes them from the mass of people in the Nephite capital. Further, the description of the Lamanites as “wandering about in the wilderness with a short skin girdle about their loins and their heads shaven” is a staple in the Nephite text (see Enos 1:20; Mosiah 10:8; Alma 3:5; 43:20; 49:6). Apparently the Gadiantons, being now self-exiled in the wilderness, have adopted the dress of the Lamanites who share that wilderness with them. Manifestly, Persuitte is putting far too much weight on the item.

Another possible parallel to the Gadianton lambskin is the “sheepskin” mentioned in Hebrews 11:37-38 as being worn by saintly outcasts, who “wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth.” For we are, surely, to think of raw, undressed skins with their wool and hairs.⁹² “Who were the homeless wanderers clad in skins?” asks Dom A. Cody. “Elijah and Elisha, David and Ezekiel, the Maccabees, perhaps, or even Jewish sectaries (cf. John the Baptist).” It may be viewed as a kind of “prophetic garb.”⁹³ (One might, perhaps, read Isaiah 11:5 and 2 Nephi 30:11 with this in mind.) W. S. McCullough says that the description of clothing in Hebrews 11:37 is “cited as illustrative of the destitution which the saints of the past had to endure.”⁹⁴ “[The book of Hebrews] obviously sees in this striking dress of the prophets an indication of their antithesis to the world, of their need and affliction, of their lonely life in the desert and mountains.”⁹⁵ What better dress could there be for

outcasts in Nephite society? Especially for those who had, as I believe the Gadiantons had, religious or sectarian pretensions.⁹⁶

Finally, to take up the last piece of apparent evidence, it is not obvious that a high percentage of anti-Masons joining the early Church would signify anything even if it were true.⁹⁷ “Converts paid no attention to anti-Masonry,” writes Bushman. “With the Anti-Masonic party growing rapidly after 1829 in New England, New York, and Ohio, Mormon converts might be expected to join the campaign to rid the nation of secret combinations. Insofar as early Mormons had political preferences, they likely were anti-Masons, but these sentiments were entirely overshadowed. Lucy Mack Smith said nothing about Masonry, Morgan, or anti-Masonry in her autobiography. Joseph was equally neglectful. At the height of the anti-Masonic excitement from 1829 to 1833, Masonry was scarcely mentioned among the Mormons.”⁹⁸ When early Latter-day Saint use of the Book of Mormon is surveyed, the theme of anti-Masonry is notable only for its absence. It simply isn’t there. This fact is all the more surprising, Grant Underwood notes, because, at least at first glance, the early Saints were precisely the kind of people who *should* have been anti-Masons.⁹⁹ “One would think that the passages on the Gadianton secret society would have aroused Smith and his followers to active involvement in anti-Masonry, but the early Mormons apparently paid no heed, even when the Anti-Masonic Party was at the peak of its influence.”¹⁰⁰

Indeed, in a report on references to the Book of Mormon within Latter-day Saint literature between 1830 and 1846, Underwood has recently questioned even Bushman’s tentative concession that the early Saints may perhaps have leaned slightly toward anti-Masonry. Bushman had admitted that little if any evidence existed for this proposition; Underwood adduces circumstantial evidence for the counterproposition that the Saints may, in fact, have tended to *oppose* anti-Masonry.¹⁰¹ (Eber D. Howe, the virulently anti-Masonic editor of the Painesville Telegraph, actually charged in March 1831 that the Masons and the Mormons were about to join together in a grand conspiracy against the Republic. Had the Book of Mormon not been printed at a “masonic press”?¹⁰² It isn’t clear to me just what being a “masonic press” would imply. However, even if Grandin’s press were, in some sense, “masonic,” the fact would seem to mean very little: Joseph and Oliver had also tried diligently to secure the services of Thurlow Weed, an *anti*-Masonic publisher in Rochester. If anything can be concluded from this, it is probably that, for them, other issues, such as Masonry and anti-Masonry, were of little concern when compared with the transcendent importance of getting the Book of Mormon published.)

This should not be surprising, since there is no good evidence that Joseph was caught up in the anti-Masonic enthusiasms of upstate New York in any event. The most obvious evidence for the negative is that he has little or nothing to say on the subject in extant sources. (And remember, it will not do simply to assume that the Gadianton robbers are Masons, and then cite the Book of Mormon as evidence for Joseph’s obsession with anti-Masonry, which obsession then proves that the Gadianton robbers are mere fictionalized Masons. That’s a logical fallacy known as “begging the question.”)

Furthermore, a survey of the Palmyra area newspaper citations commonly quoted to show the pervasiveness there of anti-Masonic themes reveals advocates of the Gadianton-Mason equation to be stumbling over a very elementary but important fact: Historians who ought to know better have often written as though Joseph Smith must have resonated to every tremor of enthusiasm and paranoia that affected the Palmyra area.¹⁰³ Even if this patently unproven assertion were true, it is not obvious that it would have any relevance to the Book of Mormon. Fawn Brodie glides smoothly over a major problem when she concludes her summary of the anti-Masonic controversy with the words, “So it happened that Joseph Smith was writing the Book of Mormon in the thick of a

political crusade that gave backwoods New York, hitherto politically stagnant and socially déclassé, a certain prestige and glory.”¹⁰⁴ The point is that the translation of the Book of Mormon did not occur in Palmyra, but rather, for the most part, in Harmony, Pennsylvania. In other words, for almost every dated Palmyra article commonly adduced, Joseph was two or three or perhaps even four days distant (in an age that lacked telephone, radio, and television). It may, of course, be the case that anti-Masonry was all the rage in Harmony as well, but this cannot be assumed without proof—and, so far as I am aware, nobody has attempted to adduce proof. Brodie asserts that the controversy spread beyond New York and eventually involved eight states. This may well be true. But the fact remains that frantically anti-Masonic quotations from *Palmyra* newspapers have no clearly demonstrated direct relevance to the mind of Joseph Smith.¹⁰⁵

The matter of Joseph’s alleged fascination with Masonry thus becomes rather problematic. And it is difficult, anyway, to believe that Joseph was a dedicated anti-Mason in 1830 when, as Hullinger himself admits, his dear brother Hyrum — who, be it also recalled, would later sign the 1839 letter to the Saints at Quincy, denouncing secret societies — had been a member of the Mount Moriah Lodge, Palmyra Lodge No. 112, since 1823.¹⁰⁶ (This is the brother whom Brodie implicitly identifies—and implies that Joseph identified — with the Book of Mormon’s Sam. He was the older brother who faithfully followed the younger. If Brodie is correct, this identification was present from the very beginning of the book)¹⁰⁷

Furthermore, the difficulty grows yet more daunting when one considers the possibility that the entire Smith family, and not just Hyrum, was involved in attempts “to win the faculty of Abrac” at least indirectly by its Masonic lore.¹⁰⁸ This is, admittedly, a controversial issue. Quinn attempts to downplay the Masonic connections of “Abrac,”¹⁰⁹ while others have denied altogether the involvement of the Smith family in such things. I do not pretend to have the definitive answer to this dispute, but I do note that, *if* the Smiths were involved in Masonic practices during the 1820s, they would seem unlikely anti-Masons during the same period. Some writers have attempted to have things both ways.

And having Joseph then turn around in the 1840s to steal his most sacred ritual from the Masons involves a rather implausibly sudden — and utterly undocumented — turnaround. Because he is aware of this difficulty, presumably, Hullinger offers a compromise. “Joseph Smith,” he claims, “condemned current expressions of Masonry, but accepted it as a truly ancient form of God’s way of maintaining relationships from Adam onward.”¹¹⁰ But if, as we have seen, the Gadianton-Freemasonic parallel is problematic, evidence for the proposition that the Book of Mormon is a tract for the *reform* of Masonry is utterly invisible.

I conclude from the brief summary and evaluation of alleged Gadianton-Masonic parallels given above that the attempt to read the Book of Mormon as even a partially implicit discussion of Freemasonry is badly flawed. It has always seemed odd to me to see the book as a lumpy stew of frontier revivalism, half-understood post-Reformation theology, assorted economic and class anxieties, topped with a generous helping of yahoo obscurantism. Its coherence is one of its most obvious qualities. “We may miss the point,” writes Richard L. Bushman,

if we treat the Book of Mormon as if it were [a] kind of hodgepodge. Sometimes we employ a proof text method in our analyses, taking passages out of context to prove a point. We seek to associate a few words or an episode with Smith or his time, the Masons here, republican ideology there, then a touch of Arminianism or of evangelical conversion preaching. While that kind of analysis may have its uses, it has had disappointing results.”¹¹¹

But the equation of the Gadianton robbers with the Freemasons fails on its own demerits, even in isolation. I believe with D. Michael Quinn “that anti-Masonic interpretations of the Book of Mormon, at least as they have been expressed so far in the literature, fit the context of these passages only superficially.”¹¹²

Mormon Responses

Whenever we encounter something new, we bring it into our mental inventory by assimilating it to things that we already know. This is the very essence of language, by which a limited number of lexical items, words, and a much more severely limited number of letters or characters serves on the whole quite adequately to describe both remembered and fresh experience. All language is metaphor. And in the nineteenth century, Masonry was an almost ubiquitous phenomenon, a readily available metaphor. In Arthur Conan Doyle’s early tale “A Scandal in Bohemia,” for instance, Freemasonry serves simply to represent the easy intimacy of the late Victorian working class, so different from the reserve and formality of their social superiors. “There is a wonderful sympathy and freemasonry among horsey men,” Sherlock Holmes says to Dr. Watson, explaining the disguise he had adopted in order to observe the flat of Miss Irene Adler.¹¹³ And the implicit comparison continues to be made today. “Terrorists are building new alliances,” writes Rushworth Kidder in the *Christian Science Monitor*. “Isolated groups are beginning to come together in what John Newhouse, a *New Yorker* writer, has dubbed ‘a freemasonry of terrorism.’ ”¹¹⁴ Obviously, nobody means by such statements that any real connection exists between a Masonic lodge in Wisconsin, say, and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine or the Japanese Red Army Faction.

An excellent example of this sort of thing is found in Islamic studies, in the case of the Nizari Ismaʿili Shiʿite sect known as the “Assassins” (their title alone should indicate at least a portion of their relevance to the Gadianton robbers).¹¹⁵ For the West, the Viennese literary figure Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall put together the standard form of their story in his book *Geschichte der Assassinen*, published in 1818.¹¹⁶ “He devoted a whole book to their history,” remarks Marshall Hodgson,

but it was conceived more as a polemic against the revolutionary danger of secret societies than as an investigation of the Nizaris themselves; he stressed all the appalling wickedness of which he found them accused, and implied that one might expect the same of the Jesuits (and of the Freemasons), who were, after all, a secret order like the Assassins.... His work was translated into English and French, and evidently served as standard interpretation of the unfortunate sect, the numerous imprecations against whom he had indefatigably gathered, resolutely doubting any suggestion that might extenuate their crimes.¹¹⁷

Unfortunately, the pseudo-parallel with the Masons affixed itself firmly to Ismaʿilism. The Ismaʿilis, wrote DeLacy O’Leary in his *Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate*, were a “masonic fraternity,” “a kind of free-masonry.”¹¹⁸ Even the loosely related group known as the “Brethren of Purity” is, to him, “a kind of masonic society at Basra.”¹¹⁹ When Duncan MacDonald describes the alleged early agnostic Ismaʿili conspiracy of Maymun al-Qaddah, he too can fall back only on what he knows: “The working of this plan,” he comments, “was achieved by a system of grades like those in freemasonry.”¹²⁰ Perhaps most surprisingly, Ismail Poonawala, himself a contemporary Indian-American Ismaʿili scholar, chooses to speak of early Ismaʿilism’s “secretive character and mysterious quasi-masonic organization.”¹²¹ This is astonishing because, as Wladimir Ivanow pointed out in an article published years ago, “it appears that all the stories about the ‘degrees of initiation,’ similar to masonic degrees, etc., are pure fiction — genuine Ismaʿili literature preserves no trace of them.”¹²²

It is hardly surprising therefore that some saw Freemasonry in the Gadianton robbers. (After all, several astronomers saw Schiaparelli's illusory Martian canals.) The question is whether we should continue to be bound in our understanding of the Book of Mormon by a metaphor with such limited appropriateness. Certainly we should not conclude that the Gadianton robbers are a figment of someone's nineteenth-century imagination simply because a handful of historians could distort them to make them fit the Procrustes bed of other modern imaginations, any more than we should conclude that the Assassins were fictional.

Richard Bushman has pointed out that the critics of the Book of Mormon who have wanted to link it to Joseph Smith's nineteenth-century New York environment have tended to focus on similarities between the Gadiantons and the Masons, while overlooking the considerable differences. Alexander Campbell is a case in point.

Conditioned by anti-Masonic rhetoric, he understandably reacted to familiar elements in the story, but readers approaching from another perspective might have noted quite different aspects of the Gadianton bands. They could with equal ease be perceived as modern terrorist guerrillas, dissenters at war with the old order, penetrating villages on the margins of official control, undermining from within, and attacking openly when they had strength. Viewed in context, the Masonic-like oaths and covenants were secondary to direct attacks on government through assassinations and military raids.

(Indeed, as I have pointed out before, the Gadianton oaths and covenants seem to have been "Masonic-like" only in the broadest and most generic sense.)

"In the supposed anti-Masonic passages in the Book of Mormon," Bushman continues,

nothing was said about Masonic degrees or elaborate initiation rituals. Anti-Masonic books went on endlessly with all the details of how one passed from degree to degree, while acceptance of a simple oath of secrecy and allegiance admitted a person to the Gadianton bands. Nor did the Gadiantons connect with Solomon's temple, the Masonic craft, or Hiram, builder of the great temple. Perhaps most important, the crucial event in the anti-Masonic campaign, the murder of the Masonic traitor William Morgan in 1826, had no equivalent in the Book of Mormon.¹²³

Another Latter-day Saint response to the alleged identity between Gadiantonism and Freemasonry has been to assert the secularism of the Gadianton movement and to deny it any real ideological character.¹²⁴ "A frequent charge against Masonry," notes Ostler, "also absent from the Book of Mormon, was that it displaced Christianity by being a religion in itself.... Book of Mormon bands of robbers were not a quasi-religious fraternity, but rather resemble bands of robbers and insurgents in the ancient Near East identifiable in legal materials from early Babylonia to Josephus."¹²⁵ As I hope to show in the near future, this assertion will have to be modified — but in a way that does not necessarily weaken it. Indeed, although I doubt that many truly secular mass movements are to be found anywhere in the ancient world, I am also convinced that the multi-faceted Gadianton phenomenon can profitably be examined from a secular perspective — provided that it is not exclusively or reductively so. To examine it along one such line of inquiry is, indeed, the burden of my essay on "The Gadianton Robbers as Guerrilla Warriors" in the present volume.

However, the fact that the Book of Mormon authors elected to treat Gadiantonism as a secular robber gang does not necessarily make them such. A close reading of the text even in its present tendentious state demonstrates that Gadiantonism was an ideological movement and an alternative religious vision of considerable seductive power. "Therefore," Alma counsels his son Helaman,

Ye shall keep these secret plans of their oaths and their covenants from this people, and only their wickedness and their murders and their abominations shall ye make known unto them; and ye shall teach them to abhor such wickedness and abominations and murders; and ye shall also teach them that these people were destroyed on account of their wickedness and abominations and their murders.... Trust not those secret plans unto this people, but teach them an everlasting hatred against sin and iniquity. (Alma 37:29, 32.)

Thus, the annalists and editors of the Book of Mormon deliberately attempt to present us with a one-sided view of a many-faceted movement. Even so, however, Ostler is correct in noting that the side they choose to present is not the side that the Palmyra milieu would have suggested to Joseph Smith had he merely been spinning out a naive anti-Masonic fiction.

Clearly, the Gadianton robbers and the Masons differ at many crucial points. “The differences may explain,” says Bushman, “why critics in Joseph Smith’s own day made so little of anti-Masonry in the Book of Mormon.”¹²⁶ Alexander Campbell barely mentioned the Masons in passing in his 1831 critique. Subsequent critics of the 1830s failed to bring them up at all, since they accepted the Spalding theory of the book’s origin — which could hardly reflect the anti-Masonic movement because Solomon Spalding had died in 1816, well before the Morgan case and the ensuing clamor. Eventually, Campbell himself came to accept the Spalding theory and, consequently, dropped his allegation about Masonry.¹²⁷ Such facts, coupled with early Mormon silence on Masonry, justify Bushman’s remark that “The people who knew anti-Masonry and the Book of Mormon in the 1830s made less of the connection than critics today.”¹²⁸

Notes

1. **Baroness Orczy, *The Scarlet Pimpernel* (New York: New American Library, Signet Classics, 1974), 27.**
2. Richard L. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism* (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1984), 128. Briefly stated, the Spalding theory alleges that the real author of the Book of Mormon was a lapsed clergyman named Solomon Spalding (or Spaulding), whose manuscript romance about a group of sailors blown off course to the New World was stolen after his death by Sidney Rigdon and conveyed to Joseph Smith. The two of them, or Rigdon alone, or Rigdon and Oliver Cowdery, or any combination of the preceding with Parley Pratt, added a religious overlay to what had been a mere secular yarn and published it as a purported scripture. This theory was born in 1833 and given publicity the following year by Eber D. Howe’s *Mormonism Unveiled* (Painesville: n.p., 1834). However, Spalding’s manuscript was rediscovered and published in 1885 and proved to bear only the slightest resemblance to the Book of Mormon. No reputable scholar today holds to the Spalding theory. On the whole, its advocacy is left to such people as the notorious “Dr.” Walter Martin, recently deceased. For analyses and summary information on the matter, see Fawn M. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 2nd ed. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1975), 442-56; and Lester E. Bush, Jr., “The Spalding Theory Then and Now,” *Dialogue* 10 (Autumn 1977): 40-69. A critical review of one recent reincarnation of the Spalding theory is L. Ara Norwood, “Review of Vernal Holley, *Book of Mormon Authorship: A Closer Look*,” in *Review of Books on the Book of Mormon* 1 (1989): 80-88.
3. Thomas F. O’Dea, *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1957), 32.
4. *Ibid.*, 24. Some of the traces of early New York that O’Dea sees in the Book of Mormon are discussed on 26-27, 31-32, 39. With his identification of “revival exhortation” (23) and “slightly concealed revival meetings” (28), as

well as his discovery that “the doctrine of the book is wholeheartedly and completely Arminian” (28), O’Dea seems pretty well to have set the research agenda for at least one contemporary critic of Book of Mormon historicity.

5. Cited in Newell G. Bringhurst, “Fawn Brodie and Her Quest for Independence,” *Dialogue* 22 (Summer 1989): 79.

6. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 413.

7. Walter F. Prince, “Psychological Tests for the Authorship of the Book of Mormon,” *American Journal of Psychology* 28 (July 1917): 373.

8. O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 266, n. 1. He does acknowledge that the question is a “not-quite-solved historical problem.” At the risk of smugness, one might point out that, if the answer “4” were excluded as the possible sum of 2 and 2, the question “2 + 2 = ?” would long remain “not-quite-solved,” as well.

9. *Ibid.*, 35.

10. Prince, “Psychological Tests,” 376.

11. The phrase is from O’Dea, *The Mormons*, 40.

12. Alexander Campbell, “Delusions,” *Millennial Harbinger* 2 (10 February 1831): 93.

13. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 128. See Campbell, “Delusions,” 88-90, for examples.

14. Campbell, “Delusions,” 88-89.

15. *Ibid.*, 89-90.

16. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 63. For her general discussion of the issue, see 63-66. Other descriptions of the episode occur at Robert N. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism: Why Joseph Smith Wrote the Book of Mormon* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1980), 100-104; Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 128-29, 231-32; David Persuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins of the Book of Mormon* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland, 1985), 174; Blake T. Ostler, “The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion of an Ancient Source,” *Dialogue* 20 (Spring 1987): 73-74.

17. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65.

18. *Ibid.*, 65. Richard L. Bushman has cast serious doubt on the alleged equivalence of Nephite and American governments, with particular reference to O’Dea. See Bushman, “The Book of Mormon and the American Revolution,” in Noel B. Reynolds, ed., *Book of Mormon Authorship: New Light on Ancient Origins* (Provo: Religious Studies Center, 1982), 189-211.

19. See Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 64 (note).

20. Persuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 177.

21. Prince, “Psychological Tests,” 380, 385, 387.

22. Theodore Schroeder, "Authorship of the Book of Mormon: Psychologic Tests of W. F. Prince Critically Reviewed," *American Journal of Psychology* 30 (January 1919): 67-68, 72. One of the names toyed with by the unfortunate Professor Prince, "Psychological Tests," 383, is, however, worth reexamining: "To us," Prince writes, "the Old French and Spanish name Isabel is richly grotesque considered as that of a descendent of Israelitish stock living in America some 2,000 years ago. The source of its adoption is clear almost to demonstration." What is that source? Why, it is a vague memory of the Castilian queen Isabella who financed Columbus. Since she was a Roman Catholic, and since Roman Catholicism is "the scarlet woman" to ultra-Protestants like Joseph Smith, "Isabel" becomes literally a practicing "harlot" in Alma 39. But is this really the source? I would suggest that the name "Isabel," far from justifying ignorant laughter, actually points to the roots of the Book of Mormon in an ancient text with Near Eastern connections, as follows: The "Jezebel" of 1 Kings in the Old Testament has long given that name a bad reputation — such that it would have been quite an appropriate name to bestow upon a harlot. In fact, the Book of Mormon *does* give that name to the harlot — only it does so in a manner arguably more accurate than could have been found in the King James Bible known to Joseph Smith. "Isabel", (cf. the modern German transliteration "Isebel") is, in my opinion, a far better rendering of the Hebrew "Izebhel" than is the KJV "Jezebel" with its misleading consonantal "j" (and better, even, than the Septuagint Greek and Vulgate Latin "Iezabel," which are presumably responsible for the KJV's rendering of the name). Thus, the name "Isabel" is unusually appropriate for its Book of Mormon context, but Joseph Smith could not have gotten it directly from his Bible.

23. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65; see also the incautiousness of O'Dea, *The Mormons*, 35.

24. L. Hicks, "Tubal-Cain," in George A. Buttrick, ed., *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. and supplement (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962-76), 4:718.

25. On the other hand, Brodie is able to summarize the endowment ceremony as "essentially fertility worship" (*No Man Knows My History*, 279), so that there is really no way of knowing what she might have seen in the Book of Mormon text to suggest Tubal Cain to her. If we were to apply to her the method she practices on Joseph Smith, we might explain this useful bit of invented evidence by reference to "the unusual plasticity of [her] mind" (see *ibid.*, 70), or to her "marvelously fecund imagination" (*ibid.*, 44). "Mrs. Brodie is at her best when there is no evidence whatever to cloud her vision," David H. Donald, the Charles Warren Professor of American History at Harvard, once observed of another of her works. "Then she is free to speculate." For an enlightening collection of non-Mormon critical responses to Brodie, see Louis Midgley, "The Brodie Connection: Thomas Jefferson and Joseph Smith," *BYU Studies* 20 (Fall 1979): 59-67.

26. See, generally, the discussion at Pursitte, in *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 173-80. Pursitte suggests several reasons for Joseph's alleged incorporation of anti-Masonic themes into his Book of Mormon (see *ibid.*, 179-80; cf. 172-74, 206-7). The reasons are all quite speculative and beyond the scope of this paper. (It is worth pointing out, however, that the Lucy Mack Smith letter upon which Pursitt's argument partially rests is now admitted by its creator to be a twentieth-century forgery.)

27. *Ibid.*, 176.

28. *Ibid.*, 180.

29. Prince, "Psychological Tests," 374. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 105-10, also tries to tie Masonry to the Book of Mormon generally, but his arguments are wholly unpersuasive.

30. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65; Pursuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 177-78; Campbell, "Delusions," 88-89.
31. Pursuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 176. This may be the drift of Brodie's inaccurate allusion to Tubal Cain. See n. 17, above.
32. *Ibid.*, 176; Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 114, n. 30 and 31. See also the references given at Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion," 73.
33. Dan Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" *John Whitmer Historical Association Journal* 9 (1989): 18.
34. The identification is implicit at *ibid.*, 27, and has been made explicit to me by Vogel in conversation. Doctrine and Covenants 42:64 should be read, according to Vogel's argument, in connection with D&C 38:12-13, 28-29, 32; 45:63-64; 84:117-19.
35. Pursuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 177.
36. *Ibid.*, 179.
37. *Ibid.*, 172-80; Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65. See also references at Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion," 73.
38. Prince, "Psychological Tests," 377-78. The Book of Mormon quotation is from 3 Nephi 6:29.
39. Pursuitte, *Joseph Smith and the Origins*, 178; cf. Campbell, "Delusions," 90.
40. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 113.
41. That Martin Harris had at least a little bit of anti-Masonry in his background is evidenced at *ibid.*, 101; cf. D. Michael Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View* (Salt Lake City: Signature Books, 1987), 161.
42. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 130.
43. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 184, provides references on the theory that the Latter-day Saint temple endowment is a plagiarism of Freemasonry. He rejects such an idea (on 184-86, 190), as do I.
44. Schroeder, "Authorship of the Book of Mormon," 70. I am not aware of anyone making such an "admission" as that referred to. I certainly would not. For Schroeder's opinion on the origin of the Book of Mormon and for his estimate of Joseph Smith, see *ibid.*, 66.
45. Dean Jessee, *The Personal Writings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1984), 405. Following Jessee, I have left the spelling of the original unchanged.
46. J. Christopher Conkling, *A Joseph Smith Chronology* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1979), 156, 158.
47. *Ibid.*, 158-59.

48. For his activities during this period of somewhat less than two months, see Conkling, *Joseph Smith Chronology*, 162-65.

49. See Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 161.

50. Jessee, *Personal Writings*, 405.

51. I use here the translation given by Stephen Benko, in his *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 55. The two citations come, respectively, from *Octavius* 8 and 9. I am grateful to my friend William Hamblin for helping me to locate these references to secrecy in the early Christian church.

52. Minucius Felix, *Octavius* 9: *Occultis se notis et insignibus noscunt*. Here I use the translation of Gerald H. Rendall (London: Heinemann, 1966), 337. For a discussion of secrecy in early Christianity, with references, see Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, 126- 27.

53. Benko, *Pagan Rome and the Early Christians*, 60.

54. See *ibid.*, 65; also Kurt Rudolph, *Gnosis*, tr. and ed. Robert M. Wilson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1983), 214.

55. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 129, 131.

56. Orczy, *Scarlet Pimpernel*, 27, 61-63, 81, 109, 153, 177.

57. See Max H. Parkin, "Mormon Political Involvement in Ohio," *BYU Studies* 9 (Summer 1969): 484-502, esp. 495.

58. *JD* 11:328.

59. A point noted, obliquely, by Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 131.

60. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 162-64.

61. See Rudolph, *Gnosis*, 275. More will be said on this matter in another projected article.

62. *Ibid.*, 162; see 161, 163-64, 166, 178-79.

63. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 161; see 164.

64. Italics in the original.

65. John Bouvier, *Bouvier's Law Dictionary and Concise Encyclopedia*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (Kansas City: Vernon Law, 1914), 1:528. Compare similar definitions at Henry C. Black, *Black's Law Dictionary*, rev. 4th ed. (St. Paul: West, 1968), 333, which was originally published in 1891, and Walter A. Shumaker and George F. Longsdorf, *The Cyclopedic Law Dictionary* (Chicago: Gallagher, 1912), 168. Both of these dictionaries offer "conspiracy" as a synonym.

66. Shakespeare, *King Henry VIII*, I, i, 169 (references are to act, scene, and line). Its corresponding verb occurs in the same sense at *Macbeth*, I, iii, 111. On the other hand, the term is used more neutrally at *Twelfth Night*, V, i, 382;

King Henry V, II, i, 109; *Julius Caesar*, IV, i, 43; and *King Lear*, V, i, 29. The connection of the word with oaths and oath-making is illustrated by the duke's remarks at *Measure for Measure*, IV, iii, 145.

67. Dan M. Wolfe, gen. ed., *Complete Prose Works of John Milton*, 8 vols. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1953-82), 1:676-77; 3:509, 574.

68. See, for example, in the *Federalist Papers* 13, 16, 25, 26, 59, 70, 73, and 77 (all by Alexander Hamilton), and in the *Federalist Papers* 49, 51, and 55 (by James Madison).

69. For the latter three documents, see Mortimer J. Adler, ed., *The Annals of America*, 21 vols., index (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, 1968-1974), 6:248-51, 251-56 ("Labor Unions and Conspiracy"), 10:333-34 ("Secret Labor Organizations"). Compare Adam Smith's remarks (first published in 1776) in *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations* 1:8 ("Of the Wages of Labour").

70. Jerreld L. Newquist, ed., *Gospel Truth* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1987), 42.

71. Richard Lloyd Anderson, "The Rise and Fall of Middle-Class Loyalty to the Roman Empire: A Social Study of Velleius Paterculus and Ammianus Marcellinus," Ph.D. diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1962, 116-23.

72. *Ibid.*, 112.

73. Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" 18, n. 3.

74. Professor John W. Welch of the J. Reuben Clark Law School at Brigham Young University undertook the search at my request and summarized the results. I am grateful to him for his assistance. In every case cited that follows, the emphasis on the phrase "secret combination" is mine.

75. See A. D. Neale and D. G. Goyder, *The Antitrust Laws of the United States of America: A Study of Competition Enforced by Law*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 16-18, 86 n. 1, 330, 333, 458-60.

76. *Ibid.*, 37, 39, 45, 247, 333 ("combination to eliminate competition"), 333 n. 1, 336, 341.

77. Joel Hills Johnson, "Autobiography," typescript in Harold B. Lee Library of Brigham Young University, 8.

78. Orson F. Whitney, *Life of Heber C. Kimball*, 2nd ed. (Salt Lake City: Stevens and Wallis, 1945), 101.

79. The text is in Adler, *Annals of America*, 5:441-47, italics added; see also 7:124-27. Note that Robinson was a Jacksonian Democrat, see *ibid.*, 5:598. Vogel, "Mormonism's 'Anti-Masonick Bible,'" would have us believe that fear of "secret combinations" was a hysteria peculiar to anti-Masons, who were uniformly anti-Jackson (since Andrew Jackson was a high-ranking Mason).

80. It is striking that the modern Greek translation of the Doctrine and Covenants renders the "secret combinations" of 42:64 by *tnystikai synotnosiai*, using the same word (*synotnosia*) as that used for the "conspiracy" to murder Paul that Acts 23:12-14 describes. The oath-bound nature of that conspiracy — the Greek word itself has for its roots *syn* ("together with") and *omnumi* ("to swear") — is perfectly appropriate for "combinations" in the Gadianton manner, as is its desire to murder a prophet and apostle of God.

81. *Times and Seasons* 5:757.

82. *JD* 25:281.

83. *JD* 25:283.

84. See Truman G. Madsen, *Defender of the Faith: The B. H. Roberts Story* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1980), 145. This is the same kind of “secret combination,” I think, as that considered in the case of *Lyon v. Pollock*, alluded to above. In view of their location, period, and apparent intent, the so-called “Knights of the Golden Circle” were most likely a Klan-related group. Although I have as yet located nothing specifically on them, Klan offshoots with names like Knights of the Air, Knights of the Flaming Sword, Knights of the White Camelia, Knights of the Great Forest, Knights of the Black Cross, Knights of the Flaming Circle, and Knights of the Golden Dawn, are well-documented.

85. See “Newel Knight’s Journal,” in “Scraps of Biography,” as reprinted in the anonymously edited *Classic Experiences and Adventures* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1969), 79.

86. See also *Messenger and Advocate* 2 (March 1836): 278.

87. B. H. Roberts, ed., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1978), 5:31011. The text of the proclamation is also in Joseph Fielding Smith, ed., *Teachings of the Prophet Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1938), 285. I am indebted to my friend and colleague Kent P. Jackson for bringing it to my attention.

88. *HC* 5:310.

89. E. W. Lane’s *Arabic-English Lexicon*, 2 vols. (Cambridge: The Islamic Texts Society, 1984), s.v. *masad*; see also J. G. Hava, *AlFara’id Arabic-English Dictionary*, 5th ed. (Beirut: Dar al-Mashriq, 1982), and John Penrice, *A Dictionary and Glossary of the Kor-an* (London: Curzon Press, 1971). Reinhardt Dozy makes it “*sparte*,” a kind of grass (Dozy’s *Supplément aux Dictionnaires Arabes*, 2 vols. [Beirut: Librairie du Liban, 1968]). Compare that with this rendering of the verse: “On her neck a rope of bast” (H. A. R. Gibb and J. H. Kramers, eds., *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam* [Leiden: Brill, 1974], s.v. Abu Lahab). The *habl* under consideration here is, reports Lane, “a plaited rope, firmly twisted” (see Hava, *Al-Fara’id*; and Penrice, *Dictionary and Glossary*). Hava is aware of an Arabic verb *masada/yamsudu* – obviously cognate with the noun *masad* – meaning “to plait a rope.” This is a parallel from the early seventh century A.D. and thus far later than the period the Book of Mormon claims for itself. But the Qur’an often mirrors ancient Near Eastern motifs, and it seems to me that this one is worthy at least of mention (see also M. M. Bravmann, *The Spiritual Background of Early Islam* [Leiden: Brill, 1972], 315-34, for potentially relevant materials from ancient Arabia).

90. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 64-65.

91. Grant Underwood, “The Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon: Windows into the Past,” *Journal of Mormon History* 12 (1985): 82; see also Parkin, “Mormon Political Involvement,” 484501; Milton V. Backman, Jr., *The Heavens Resound: A History of the Latter-day Saints in Ohio, 1830-1838* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1983), 24, 335. An as-yet-unpublished book-length study by Professor Backman on the Mormons in Ohio will include computerized statistical data on early Mormon Jacksonianism.

92. O. Michel, "Melope," in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, tr. Geoffrey W. Bromiley, 10 vols. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1964-76), 4:637. W. S. McCullough, "Sheepskin," in Buttrick, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 317, reads: "As sheepskin must have been one of the commonest leathers of biblical Palestine, the paucity of references to it in the Bible is remarkable."

93. Dom A. Cody, "Hebrews," in Reginald C. Fuller, Leonard Johnston, and Conleth Kearns, eds., *A New Catholic Commentary on Holy Scripture* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1975), 1235 (942a).

94. McCullough, "Sheepskin," 317.

95. Michel, "Melope," 637.

96. Could there be a real referent for the warning against "false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (see Matthew 7:151 = 3Nephi 14:151)? Although by far most references to sheep or lambs in the Book of Mormon are metaphorical, as are most quotations from Old World writings, its peoples did raise sheep (see Ether 9:18; Alma 5:59; 25:12). That the Gadianton movement was characterized by a heretical religiosity (from the standpoint of the Book of Mormon writers) is one of the propositions I intend to advance in yet another paper on this topic, currently in progress.

97. Bushman, *Joseph Sntith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 232, n. 46, cites one piece of evidence that might tend to confirm Hullinger's claim—but in such a way as to lessen one's confidence in it.

98. *Ibid.*, 131.

99. See Grant Underwood's examination of periodicals and pamphlets published before 1846, in his article, "Book of Mormon Usage in Early LDS Theology," *Dialogue* 17 (Autumn 1984): 35-74. Underwood explicitly endorses Bushman's assertion that "Masonry was scarcely mentioned among the [early] Mormons" at p. 81 of his article on "Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon."

100. Richard L. Bushman, "The Book of Mormon in Early Mormon History," in Davis Bitton and Maureen U. Beecher, eds., *New Views of Mormon History: Essays in Honor of Leonard J. Arrington* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah, 1987), 4.

101. Underwood, "Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon," 82.

102. See Parkin, "Mormon Political Involvement," 494-95; Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 232 n. 46. E. D. Howe, incidentally, would immortalize himself in subsequent Latter-day Saint history with his 1834 publication of the first anti-Mormon book, *Mormonistn Unveiled*.

103. Thus Prince, "Psychological Tests," 378, claims: "The author of the Book of Mormon was, at the time he was writing it, powerfully obsessed by the ideas and emotions which characterized that popular movement [i.e., anti-Masonry] which, beginning in western New York in 1826, was to subside last in the same region."

104. Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 65.

105. *Ibid.*, 63. I thank John W. Welch for suggesting this line of thought to me.

106. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 105; see also Schroeder, "Authorship of the Book of Mormon," 7: "At the time of writing the Book of Mormon, Hyrum Smith a brother and co-conspirator of Joseph Smith was already a mason, as also were Heber Kimball and others of the neighborhood who became leading Mormons. It requires more evidence than Dr. Prince has produced to prove that Joseph Smith had an anti-Masonic obsession, working subconsciously."

107. See the relevant discussion in her "Supplement" to the second edition of her biography, in Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 413-16.

108. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 104-5; 116, n. 46.

109. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 54-56.

110. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 112-13.

111. Bushman, "The Book of Mormon in Early Mormon History," 5.

112. Quinn, *Early Mormonism and the Magic World View*, 161.

113. *The Strand Magazine* originally published the story between July 1891 and June 1892 in the series *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*.

114. Rushworth M. Kidder, *The Christian Science Monitor*, 13 May 1986, 18. Margaret Drabble's obscure allusion to "the esoteric masonic paradise of Oxford" also illustrates continuing metaphorical use of Freemasonry (see her novel, *A Summer Bird Cage* [New York: New American Library, Plume Books, 1985], 11).

115. A future article will examine that relevance in some detail.

116. Joseph von Hammer-Purgstall, *Geschichte der Assassinen* (Stuttgart, 1818), was still used as an authority as late as the 1930s. Fortunately, it has been replaced in recent years by far more reliable and less tendentious accounts, notable among which are Marshall G. S. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins: The Struggle of the Early Nizari Ismaʿilis against the Islamic World* ('s-Gravenhage: Mouton, 1955); and Bernard Lewis, *The Assassins: A Radical Sect in Islam* (New York: Basic Books, 1968). Enno Franzius, *History of the Order of Assassins* (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1969), is somewhat less reliable.

117. Hodgson, *The Order of Assassins*, 27.

118. De Lacy O'Leary, *A Short History of the Fatimid Khalifate* (London: Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner, 1923), 17, 21.

119. *Ibid.*, 139.

120. Duncan B. MacDonald, *Development of Muslim Theology, Jurisprudence and Constitutional Theory* (Lahore: Premier Book House, n.d.), 41.

121. I. K. Poonawala, *Biobibliography of Ismaʿili Literature* (Malibu: Undena, 1977), 6. Professor Poonawala, my teacher in graduate school, has no rival in his knowledge of the vast and arcane field of Ismaʿili literature, and I

certainly do not dispute his mastery. That even he would use the Masonic metaphor shows how pervasive it has become, despite its inapplicability.

122. W. Ivanow, "Isma'iliya," in the *Shorter Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 181.

123. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 130-31. (I have corrected an obvious printing error.) See Bushman's discussion of the anti-Masonic campaign on p. 129; cf. Hullinger, *Mormon Answer to Skepticism*, 101. Hullinger, *ibid.*, 115, n. 32, looks away from the Book of Mormon to the Pearl of Great Price and sees the "Irada" of Moses 5:49-50 as the Morgan figure.

124. This, I think, is something of the approach taken by John W. Welch, "Theft and Robbery in the Book of Mormon and Ancient Near Eastern Law," F.A.R.M.S. Working Paper, 1985, and is reflected as well in Terrence L. Szink, "A Just and True Record (3 Nephi 1-5)," in Kent P. Jackson, ed., *Studies in Scripture: Volume Eight, Alma 30 to Moroni* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 128-34.

125. Ostler, "The Book of Mormon as a Modern Expansion," 74. For the nineteenth-century claim that Masonry was a counterfeit religion, Ostler cites the *Proceedings of the Anti-Masonic Convention, 11 Sept. 1830* (Philadelphia: I. P. Trimble, 1830), 43-45, 79-83, 1027. For the ancient Near Eastern parallels, he relies mostly upon Welch, "Theft and Robbery," which I shall discuss in a future article.

126. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 131.

127. *Ibid.*, 131. It seems that the incompatibility of the Spalding theory with purported traces of the Morgan-Masonry excitement (which commenced in late 1826) in the Book of Mormon was at least a minor factor in Fawn Brodie's rejection of the theory (see Brodie, *No Man Knows My History*, 454).

128. Bushman, *Joseph Smith and the Beginnings of Mormonism*, 131; see Underwood, "Earliest Reference Guides to the Book of Mormon," 81.